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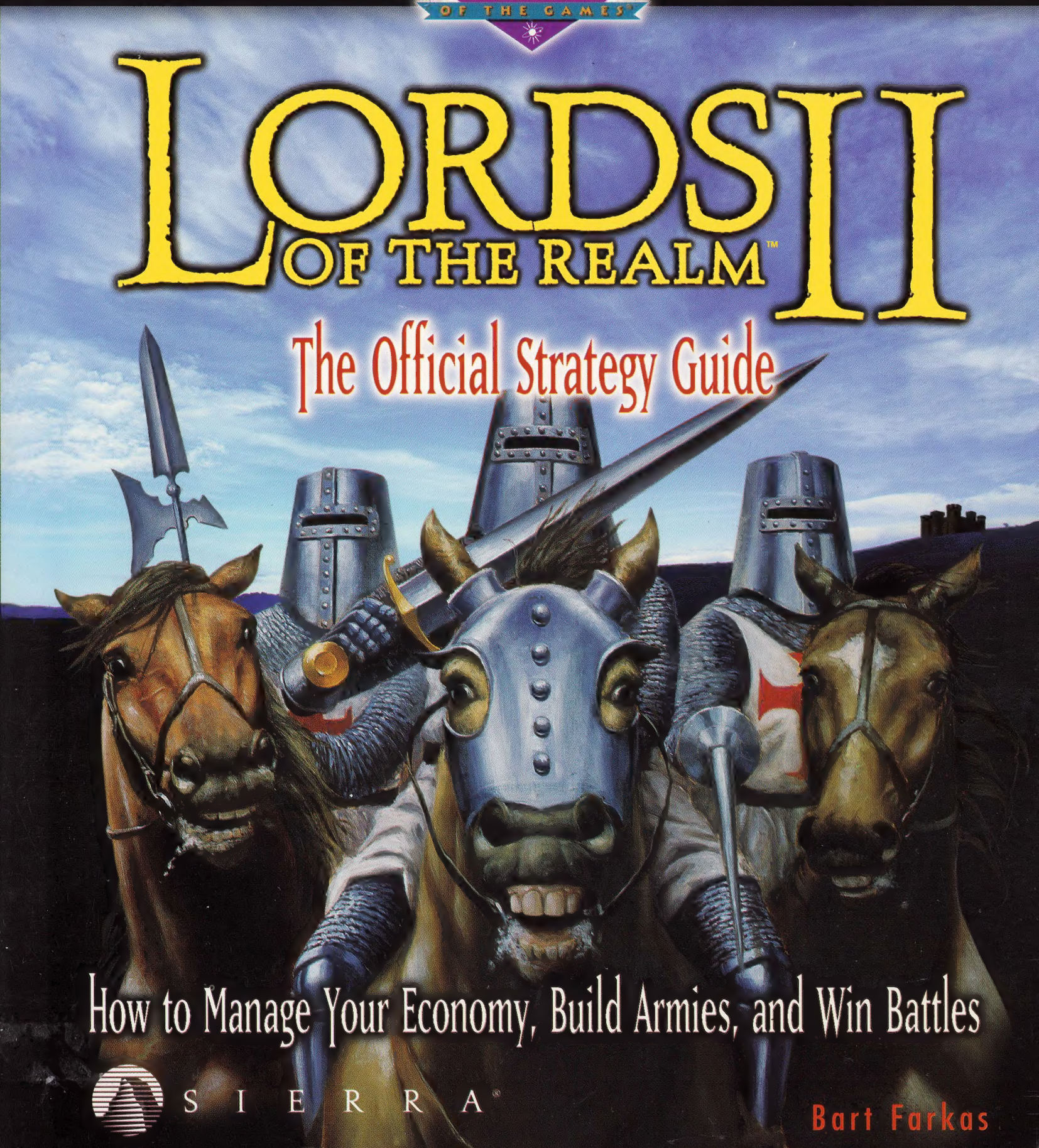
LORDS OF THE REALM™ II

The Official Strategy Guide



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Bart Farkas

Lords of the Realm™ II

The Official Strategy Guide

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Lords of the Realm™ II

The Official Strategy Guide

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Foreword

Strategy guides have become extremely popular in the last few years, and have also become the subject of some controversy online. My opinion is that a strategy guide should be a useful companion to a game manual–an optional extra which some game players will want to buy in order to derive extra value out of their game purchase–not a necessary purchase to make up for a lousy manual. I am pleased to say that I feel confident that this guide meets that description, and, as such, will be worthwhile for anyone wanting to get more out of *Lords of the Realm II.*

Lords of the Realm II is my biggest and, in my admittedly biased opinion, best game to date. Already, as I write, there is much discussion of the game online, and the consensus seems to be clear: that *Lords II* is a substantial improvement over the original. One thing is certain: There are many more options and maps, and, therefore, many more potential hours of fun in the game. Given that, a strategy guide becomes a lot more valuable.

It is always a challenge to know exactly how hard to make a game. With most of our games, I think we have erred on the side of making them slightly too difficult. With *Lords II*, we tried very hard to create an easier start to the game. Where we are now is interesting–there are some users that clearly find the game too easy to start with (as expected) while others are still finding it quite a challenge.

Wherever you fit into this spectrum, I am sure you will find this book a useful addition, and hope that it will lead you to even more enjoyment from *Lords of the Realm II*.

As always with projects as large as games, there are many people to thank for making it all come together. With *Lords of the Realm II*, the credits in the game do a good job of recognizing those efforts. However I'd like to make a couple of small additions: To Neal Sumsion, who began beta testing after the manual had gone to press, and provided us with some excellent feedback just in time to make it into the game, and to Doug Gonya, who has worked hard with me in helping Prima make this strategy guide what it is–my thanks to both of you.

I'd also like to thank the people at Prima for their help and understanding; it's never an easy time to get a designer or producer's time when they're trying to put a game to bed–and yet that's what Prima has to do in order to put these books out so they're there when you, the customer, needs them. Again, I am grateful for your understanding.

I feel that *Lords of the Realm II* has a lot to offer to any gamer; with this book, I am confident that you'll all be able to get through the learning curve to have fun!

David Lester

Introduction

The year is 1268 AD, and the throne of England sits empty... Thus begins your journey across one of the hottest new computer landscapes to hit the shelves in recent years. *Lords of the Realm II* puts you in the shoes of a nobleperson poised to make a bid for the coveted crown. Unfortunately, there will also be a number of other nobles keen on capturing the ultimate prize.

Lords of the Realm II is a wonderfully detailed construction of medieval times, inviting you to enter a rich world where the throne of England—or any of 23 territories—awaits a rightful ruler. Careful administration of resources, population management, and shrewd battle strategies must be delicately balanced in order to achieve victory.

In addition to the enemies you make while satisfying your destiny, the alliances you form also constitute a major component in your exploration of *Lords of the Realm II.* Machiavellian political savvy will be needed, as gift giving, complimenting, and likewise insulting, become tactics integral to your success. It's hard to make it in the world of *Lords*

of the Realm II without some friends, as your enemies will have but one objective in mind: to crush all opposition as they vie for their own power. It's only a matter of time before the countryside rings with the sounds of epic battle.

How to use this Book

With so many of the pertinent variables subject to the game player's manipulation, *Lords of the Realm II* becomes a very expansive, non-linear game. Many times, hours of play are needed to finesse victory away from your opponents. Indeed, you may suffer several brutal defeats while developing your own winning strategies.

That aside, there are many solid techniques that anyone can use to improve their chances of victory—and that's where this book will be of greatest value to you. Once you have a grasp of some larger game concepts, it becomes easier to appreciate and manipulate the subtle aspects of *Lords II* which are under your direct control, and thereby propel yourself to convincing victory.

Plan For Success

Before delving into subsequent chapters, which look at various components of the game in detail, it makes sense to consider up front just what kind of a medieval mind you possess.

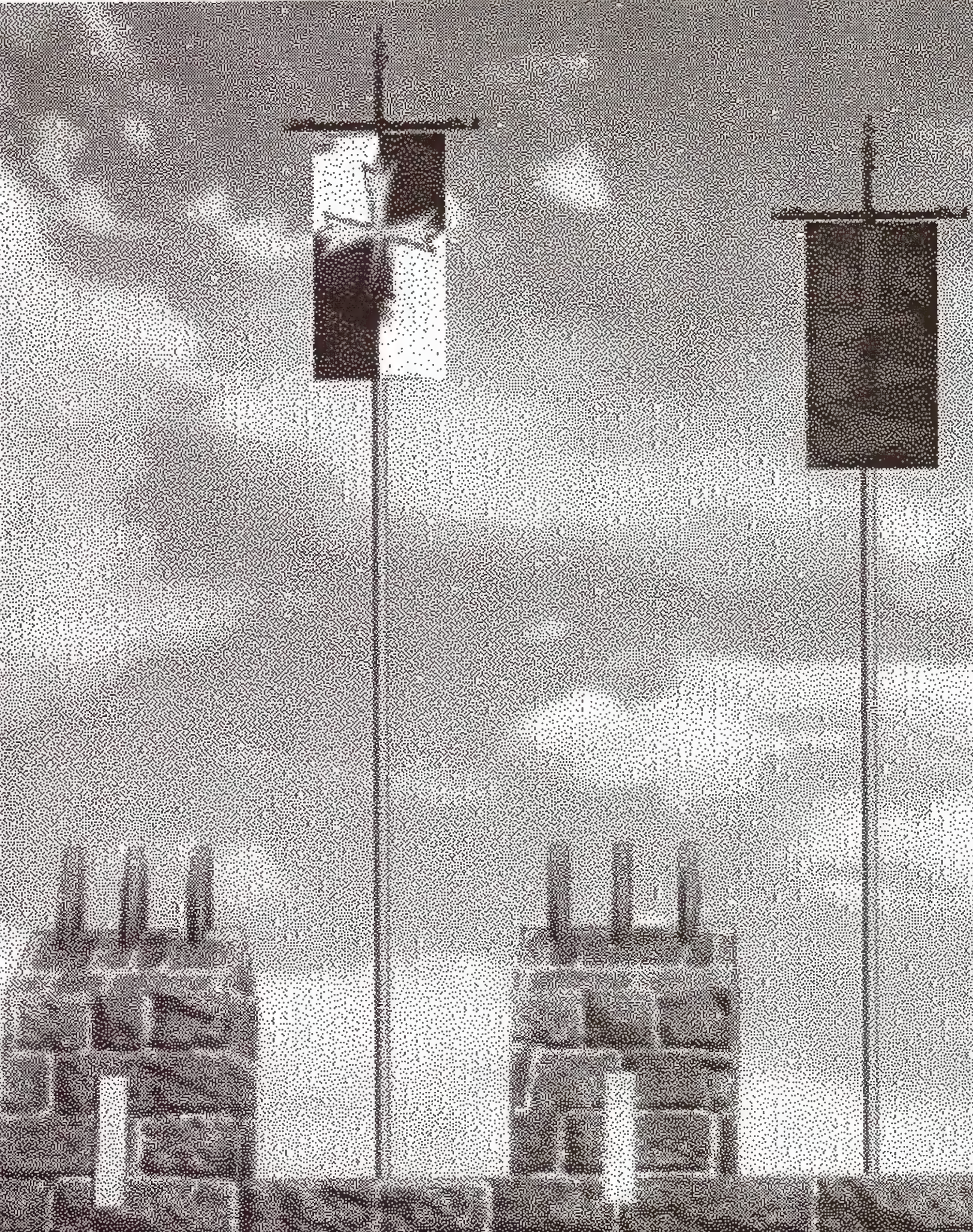
As you progress through *Lords of the Realm II*, you'll want to make game decisions based on a philosophy that you establish early and maintain throughout, probably with just enough out-of-character maneuvering to keep your opponents off balance. In short, you'll need to evaluate the hand you're dealt as the game begins, and determine the best way to maximize your power in a minimal time.

The availability of raw materials most directly influences whether a certain objective (equipping an army or constructing a castle, for instance) will require more or less finesse on the political front, as large supplies of certain commodities (iron, stone, timber) are essential to the manufacture of weapons or strongholds. Still, as long as you work to develop a solid economic base in the early turns of the game, and maintain a relatively consistent approach throughout, claiming the crown becomes a very realistic prospect.

The throne of England sits empty . . . but not for long.

Lords of the Realm™ II

The Official Strategy Guide



1 Overview

Lords of the Realm II is a game about managing a county, expanding and conquering in a bid to defeat your opponents, and being crowned King of England. These three main elements are intertwined in such a way that you will not be able to succeed in one without good performance in the others. Battles may be won by the sword–but you need to be good at kingdom management if your soldiers are to have any swords with which to fight!

It is precisely this mix of game elements that gives *Lords II* its wonderful playability–and can also make it infuriating (usually in a good way!).

As a result, the game revolves around the status of your county/counties, and, in particular, the peasants therein. Each county has a population, and a happiness and health rating. Be sure to learn these concepts if you plan to master the game.

Happiness

Happiness is the way to large armies–or to failure. If your people are happy, you will be able to conscript peasants to fight for you, although every time you do so, the happiness of the remaining peasants will be reduced. The greater the percentage

you conscript, the less happy the remaining peasants—not unreasonably, I'm sure you'd agree! If you are to conquer the country, you will need plenty of soldiers—and to persuade them to join your army, you'll need to keep your peasants happy.

Happiness is also important because it affects the birth rate of your people. If your people are happy, they'll bring many more "little peasants" into the world than if they're unhappy (after all, who'd want to bring offspring into a cruel, harsh world?). Happiness below 25 will be very detrimental to new births, while happiness above 75 will do wonders for your budding labor force.

Tax is the other major influence on happiness. You'll need gold if you are to succeed in your bid for the Crown, but you'll have to weigh that need carefully against your greater need for soldiers, and thus, happiness.

Health

Health is important, in some ways even more so than happiness, since it affects both happiness AND the death rate. A good birth rate is fine, but can be wiped out by too many deaths. Poor health will quickly wipe out your happiness and

your population through increased deaths. The health of your population is shown by the thermometer on your display panel; red indicates a low, bad level of health. Be warned: health is only improved by rations. Normal rations will, over time, improve the health of your serfs. For faster improvements, though, you'll need to step up to the plate with double or triple rations for several turns running.

Although these two concepts seem fairly straightforward, they are the basis for the richness of *Lords II*, and you'll quickly learn to watch them very carefully. With care, you'll see them both in good shape, and your counties will thrive.

Offensive Units

These are the units you'll have to become intimate with if you intend to defeat the minions of computer-generated opponents. Knowing the particulars of each of these units can make the difference between glorious victory and crushing defeat on the battlefield. This is especially true when you are outnumbered. Read on, brave warrior.

Legend

Cost	This is the cost of one unit in gold pieces.
Speed	Speed at which a unit moves.
Armor	This is a defense factor that applies ONLY to missile/ranged attacks.
Hand-to-Hand Attack	Attack factor for intimate combat.
Hand-to-Hand Defense	Defense factor for intimate combat.
Ranged Attack	The strength of ranged attack for crossbows and archers.
Reload Time	The time it takes crossbows and archers to reload.

Archers

Cost	32
Speed	4
Armor	0
Hand-to-Hand Attack	1
Hand-to-Hand Defense	1
Ranged Attack	4
Reload Time	Fast

Archers are the cheapest ranged weapon available in *Lords of the Realm II*, and in many instances, are the most effective. Archers can shoot over obstacles such as bridges or rocks (or your own men) and, therefore, are a huge asset when you can protect them. Keeping hordes of archers behind protective lines of peasants, macemen or pikemen is an excellent way to cut the opposition to shreds. However, in hand-to-hand combat, a few macemen will turn hundreds of archers into so much hamburger before you can say "Arch-Deluxe™."

Crossbows

Cost	48
Speed	4
Armor	2
Hand-to-Hand Attack	1
Hand-to-Hand Defense	2
Ranged Attack	9
Reload Time	Slow

Crossbowmen are the other ranged weapon at your disposal. Although these troops have a shorter range, they can fire with with more accuracy and are armored better for hand-to-hand and ranged attack. Crossbows are particularly good when placed in castles and against knights—they are a lot more powerful against armor than longbows. However, these advantages do not come without a price, both literally and figuratively. Crossbowmen cost 33% more than their counterparts, and take over twice as long to reload during battle. This last factor makes crossbowmen better as an adjunct to your compliment of archers rather than your sole ranged weapon source.

Knights

Cost	88
Speed	10
Armor	8
Hand-to-Hand Attack	10
Hand-to-Hand Defense	8

Knights are the most expensive units available—and for good reason. After all, these are your quickest warriors and can cover ground almost twice as fast as the next fastest unit. Add to that an awesome attack and defense rating (even against ranged attacks) and these units are the darlings of your force. Unfortunately, they'll set you back 88 gold coins a piece, making it very difficult to build a substantial force with them. On the battlefield, you must be careful that you don't move them en masse with other units. Otherwise, your knights will end up getting there first, thus getting pummeled by enemy forces while your other units head toward the battle. However, if you can come up with knights in sufficient numbers, they can lay waste to an army of peasants in no time at all.

Macemen

Cost 20

Speed 6

Armor 3

Hand-to-Hand Attack 7

Hand-to-Hand Defense 7

These units have an excellent combination of attack, defense, movement, and ranged attack defense values, but are still your cheapest units. Their Achilles' heel rears its head when they must fight against ranged attacks (when they are being fired upon from a distance by archers and crossbows), or knights (Oh, My!). These complaints are minor, however, when compared to the benefits of the macemen. Many players (myself included) always make sure to have plenty of macemen on hand for those battles against peasants and archers. When facing those units, a few macemen can go a very long way.

Peasants

Cost	(no direct cost)
Speed	4
Armor	0
Hand-to-Hand Attack	1
Hand-to-Hand Defense	1

Ah, yes, the peasant. Despite what we might want to think, if we look back through our family trees, most of us come from these humble ranks. Indeed, peasants are quite literally the backbone of any army. Not only do they serve a valuable function on the battlefield, but all your units are ultimately recruited from this pool of humanity. Having a substantial peasant force can help with several battlefield maneuvers, not the least of which is a blocking maneuver to prevent enemy troops from getting at your crossbows or archers. Whatever your preferences, it's always wise to keep a couple hundred peasants in an army, if for nothing else than to soak up boiling oil during castle sieges.

Pikemen

Cost 26

Speed 3

Armor 9

Hand-to-Hand Attack 5

Hand-to-Hand Defense 10

Pikemen are the second-most inexpensive units, and have a special set of abilities that need to be used in the correct manner to get full value from their presence. Pikemen are excellent defenders against both ranged and hand-to-hand combat, thus making them excellent for blocking bridges or protecting a defensive line. Pikemen are the best overall defenders in the game, so if defense is your bag, you'll want to stock up on these guys in spades. The only unit that pikemen need to really look over their shoulder for are those pesky knights: with an attack value of 10, knights will not be defeatable in an even heat.

Swordsmen

Cost	46
Speed	2
Armor	10
Hand-to-Hand Attack	7
Hand-to-Hand Defense	7

If you are facing opponents that rely heavily on ranged attacks, stack your army with swordsmen. Although fairly expensive, swordsmen have the maximum defense value against archers and crossbows. Add to this their decent hand-to-hand values, and you have a powerful, flexible fighting unit. A force of swordsmen and macemen makes for a menacing combination for your enemies, and combined, can take on knights with reasonable success. Other than the price tag, the only remaining drawback lies in their sluggish movement. If moving into position quickly is important, don't count on swordsmen. Even peasants can outrun them 2:1.

Table 1-1 Comparative Unit Statistics

	Ranged Attack	Armor	Speed	Hand-to-Hand Attack	Hand-to-Hand Defense
Peasants	n/a	4	0	1	1
Macemen	n/a	6	3	7	7
Archers	4 (Fast Reloads)	0	0	1	1
Pikemen	n/a	3	9	5	10
Crossbowmen	9 (Slow Reloads)	4	2	1	2
Swordsmen	n/a	2	10	7	7
Knights	n/a	10	8	10	8

Note: Armor is defense rating against ranged attack only.

Siege Weapons

When attacking a well-defended county, you will undoubtedly face a garrison waiting in some sort of castle. There are several siege weapons that you can build on an on demand basis for these situations. Likewise, when defending a castle, you have a unit especially designed for defending your fortress: the dreaded burning oil. Whether attacking or defending, utilizing these units properly can make the difference between dancing a victory dance or pulling several arrows and a mace out of your chest.

Battering Ram

Cost n/a

Speed n/a

Armor n/a

Battering rams are highly specialized devices used only when laying siege to enemy castles. They move very slowly, but can usually withstand enough punishment to succeed in breaking down the castle's gate. Although you can place a battering ram

anywhere on the castle perimeter, it can only destroy gates. Remember to get the ram out of the way once the gate has fallen or your troops may not be able to get inside the castle walls.

Catapult

Cost n/a

Speed n/a

Armor n/a

Catapults are probably the least practical of the siege weapons; however, they can also be the most fun if used in a disturbed and rather vengeful manner. Catapults are used to bombard the castle walls until they collapse, thus opening a route for other troops to pour onto the defending units. Unfortunately, catapults cannot be used to damage enemy units per se; indeed, they can only be used against certain portions of the castle walls. The advantage of catapults lies in their firing range, which allows them to beat on the walls from a distance, while both your catapults and troops wait safely out of the enemy's range.

Oil

Cost n/a

Speed n/a

Armor n/a

Oil serves only one purpose, but it's a nasty purpose. When enemy troops are pounding at the gates or walls of your fortress, you can pour burning oil on them, inflicting heaps of damage in mere seconds. Oil is slow to move, and not always easy to get on the enemy, but it can be a highly effective method of crowd control in siege situations.

Siege Tower

Cost n/a

Speed n/a

Armor n/a

Siege towers are specially constructed units with a built-in ramp that will enable your troops to gain entrance to many of the castle structures (depending on the height of the wall). If the enemy has numerous troops lining the walls of the castle,

it can be difficult to get your troops inside the walls in substantial numbers. However, if you use several siege towers, you can attack from multiple points and throw your enemy off balance. Siege towers are best used in conjunction with battering rams or catapults.

Structures

The structures in *Lords II* can be divided into two categories: castles, and everything else. The former are expensive structures that not only provide an added measure of support for the county in which they reside, but also serve to increase tax revenue once they are completed. The other notable 'structures' in the game are villages, the various industries that supply the commodities, town centers, and the fields in which crops are raised.

Wooden Palisade

Resources Needed	n/a
Tax Revenue Boost	50%
Oil	n/a

The wooden palisade is a simple and relatively inexpensive circular fortress made entirely of wood. There is no moat surrounding this smallest of castles, and it will quickly crumble under a catapult barrage or battering ram attack. However, it will provide some measure of extra defense and could give you the edge you need when outnumbered.

Motte and Bailey

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 75%

Oil n/a

The motte and bailey (dating from around the 9th century) is one of the oldest castle models known. This structure was usually built on a mound and fenced in by a pair of circular walls, and sometimes (as is the case in *Lords II*), at least a portion of the castle is surrounded by a moat. Although structurally, the motte and bailey really doesn't provide any greater measure of protection over the palisade, the moat around the rear hoop provides for a superior defensive position. If enemy

troops come in through the front, they must pass through a narrow passage to get to your flag. If they can't accomplish that, they'll have to get their shovels warmed up and start filling in that moat!

Norman Keep

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 100%

Oil n/a

This is usually the castle you'll begin with in your home county, and it ranks in the middle of the pack in defensive value. The Norman keep is a straightforward square tower structure, built primarily from stone (get those quarries humming!). For you historical buffs, the White Tower in the Tower of London is the 'original Norman Keep'. This castle sports two gates between the front and rear portion of the castle, often forcing the enemy to bring a battering ram inside the castle walls. The rear section is elevated beyond the reach of siege towers, thus providing an extra measure of safety for the precious flag. All

of the walls of the keep provide an excellent platform for a gaggle of archers to reign pain mainly on the...enemy.

Stone Castle

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 125%

Oil n/a

The stone castle is a much more formidable castle to lay siege against. It has a six turrets that are all too high for a siege tower to reach, and these raised sections are impervious to catapult attack. This castle is built entirely from stone, and the flag is housed in a raised area that is at least two gates away from your forces. On the bright side, the stone castle has no moat, so your troops can gain access from multiple locations (without having to shovel) via siege towers, while your battering ram bludgeons at the gates. If you are greatly outnumbered when laying siege to a stone castle, you're in for plenty of heartache. Between the excellent archer and cross-bow positions that the turrets afford, and the burning oil, you will be in tough shape.

Royal Castle

Resources Needed n/a
Tax Revenue Boost 150%
Oil n/a

I know what you're thinking—but no, you do NOT get to date Princess Diana if you have a royal castle. It just doesn't work that way. However, what you DO get is almost as good as a date with Lady Di. This is the largest of the castles and is surrounded entirely by a moat. There are nine turrets (each with oil), two gates (only one can be accessed by a ram), plenty of room for enemy troops, and an ominous central tower which looms over the battlefield. If the enemy has any decent garrison at all in the castle, you will have to use all your savvy to successfully capture the flag without enduring heavy losses. Yep, when going up against this monstrosity, it could be do or Di.

Village

Villages basically serve only one function: to house the excess population of your county. If there are many villages scattered around your county, it is safe to say that prosperity is upon

you. However, villages can be destroyed by enemy armies, thus sapping your population. Be careful to protect villages from nasty-minded opponents.

Townsite (Kingdom Map)

Each county has a townsite. The townsite icon simply serves to indicate the relative prosperity of your county. Generally, the more crowded your townsite, the better things are. The mercenary icon also appears in the townsite if there are mercenaries for hire. If you want to capture a county with no castle, you must attack the townsite.

Commodities

In order to attain victory in *Lords of the Realm II*, you must have a solid grip on the economics and food supply situation. Without timber and iron, it is impossible to equip an army, and without quarried stones you won't be building any royal digs. Most of all, let's not forget sustenance, without which your followers will starve, grow unhappy, and eventually desert you. This section will introduce you to what each commodity is, and where it can be grown/manufactured/mined.

Wheat

Cost from Merchant 4

Wheat is one of two foods available in *Lords of the Realm II*. It takes 5 wheat units (for seed) and an entire season (four turns) to grow a wheat crop. This makes wheat the riskier of the two food sources; however, when managed properly, the wheat can be stored for many turns in order to hedge against disaster. The risk with wheat is that if an enemy destroys a wheat crop one turn before harvest, you've just lost the potential of that field for the last three turns (because it took three turns to get where you were). Wheat also requires less labor to maintain, and thus frees up your population for other tasks.

Cows

Cost from Merchant 24

Cows are the other food source in *Lords II*. They represent a very different kind of food supply, much like they do in real life. Cows require much larger labor forces to manage the population, and they also tend to take up a lot of space. It is not

uncommon to find every field in a county cluttered with cows. However, cows offer a unique advantage, especially for lower-population counties. Cows make milk, which, in turn, makes cheese, which can then be fed to your people without slaughtering your cow population every month. Think cows are great? Well, they have some drawbacks and need to be managed carefully in order to make your county thrive.

Timber

Cost from Merchant 2

Timber, as you might expect, is needed for making everything from the wood of the archer's bow, to constructing castles. Timber comes from a timber industry that does not necessarily exist in every county. The timber square has a little guy chopping wood: the faster he chops, the greater the timber output. If you have a one-county empire and no timber industry, you will be forced to buy your timber from the merchant in order to produce or build anything.

Stone

Cost from Merchant 4

Stone is important for only one reason: Castles. You will need abundant stones If you are going to build a massive castle to protect your home county. Stones are harvested from a quarry, but as with the timber and mining industries, not all counties are lucky enough to have stone quarries. Fortunately, stone is relatively cheap and can be purchased from the merchant.

Iron

Cost from Merchant 2

Iron is critical for weapons manufacture. Without iron, you cannot build pikemen, crossbows, swordsmen, knights, or even macemen. Again, iron can be purchased from the merchant, but it is best to mine iron as you progress through the game, ensuring a steady supply and freeing up extra money for other purposes.

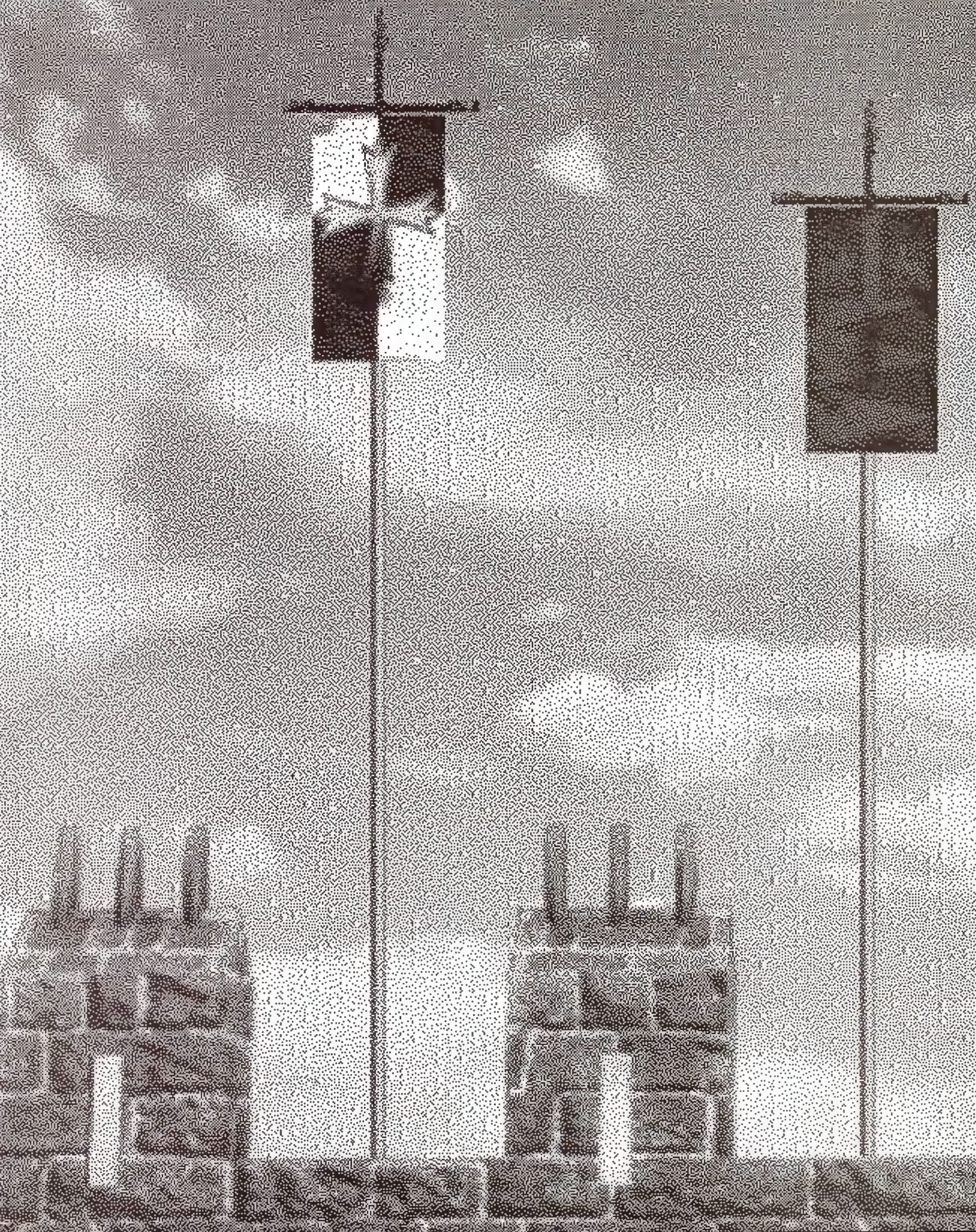
Ale

Cost from Merchant n/a

Ale essentially is alcoholic beverages. It has only one use: to cheer up your people when they are generally unhappy and approaching revolution. Ale is used on a one-turn one-time basis to increase the happiness factor in individual counties. Ale can only be purchased from the merchant.

Blacksmith

The blacksmith is where all of your weapons manufacturing takes place. Clicking on the blacksmith square turns production on and off. The faster the animation of the square, the more you are producing. But not surprisingly, the rate of weapons manufacturing is dependent on the amounts of timber and iron at your disposal.



2 Building and Running a Kingdom

Building your Kingdom — When and Where to Conquer

Lords II is an in-depth game that offers enormous replayability due to the many different paths you can take. Likewise, for every different way you can play it, your enemies can find ways of their own! One of the many decisions in *Lords II* is when to take that deep breath, raise the largest army you can, and launch an attack to try and conquer another county. This chapter will give you some ideas about different strategies you can follow; there are many variations on these themes that you will discover for yourself, using these as a base.

Of course, the strategies outlined here will need to be adapted to your opponents' behavior; if they manage to prevent you from using these approaches, then you'll have to cope as well as you can.

Fast and Furious

One popular strategy is to raise an army right at the start of the game and launch an offensive before your opponents have a chance to react. This can be very effective since the other counties will usually be quite weak, and will, therefore, put up very little resistance. You can try to sell almost everything in your county in order to raise a well-prepared army. At the start of the game, few will be brave enough to try this "risk everything" approach, and you'll likely have a much stronger army than your enemy.

At the beginning, focus your resources on archers, macemen, and pikemen—they're the cheapest to build or buy. At this stage of the game, you are unlikely to face the knights or crossbows, which would cut them to shreds in no time.

March your soldiers into a neighboring county, which is (depending on which map you're playing) probably neutral. If you have a choice of counties that fit this description, choose the one with the fewest villages. Note that at the beginning of the game, even neutrals can be armed! Neutral counties' arms vary with the difficulty level, so if you're playing on the easy

level (which is the case if you're at the start of the "Play Now" Campaign), you shouldn't face too much resistance.

Try to head towards one of your enemies, too. Since every one of your counties needs to touch another, you want to be able to reach an enemy with as few intervening battles as possible. It's likely that even the weakest resistance will inflict some damage on your initial army, and after what you've done to your main county, it will be awhile before you get another!! Every man counts....

Take as many counties early on as you can with this main army. With each county that you conquer, nurture it with low taxes (say 2%) and high rations (if possible). Use wagons to distribute any spare food you may have in one county to another, more needy county. Don't worry about low populations at this stage—you can boost them later. Right now, you just want to keep the counties ticking over and reasonably well fed (on half rations at the least). As soon as happiness in these counties gets above 75% or so, raise more troops, armed if you can afford it, to add to your lone conquering army.

Not only does this strategy give you the advantage of access to lots of resources, it also deprives your opponents of

the same. There can be a lot of value in making sure they can't use a stone quarry, for example, even if you don't have the labor to be able to start using it yourself right away.

Your risk is that by the time you reach an enemy, he may have developed a bigger army than yours; you will have to judge the character of your opponent. Many won't take this risk-all approach, though, and will put up a pitiful defense against you—and will be crushed. You must also hope that your lone army defeats everything in its path so that no resistance can arise to attack your defenseless counties while your army is miles away.

Slow, but Steady

A more conservative approach would be to build up your starting county until the population is over 1,000, and your serfs are well fed and happy. By this stage, you should have built up a good stockpile of weapons, or raw materials and some gold.

At this stage, go all out to build a castle—preferably the stone castle. Keep your people fed, but don't be frightened to put them onto half rations for a few turns while you build the

castle. Start by amassing all the materials you'll need. Only give the command to build the castle when you have the materials. That way, you will have access to the resources should you be attacked by an enemy. Once you have started construction, move as much labor as possible onto the task, shutting down all other industries until the castle is built.

Once built, start raising gold—your tax revenues will be far higher than before, so it shouldn't take long before you build up a good supply (2,000 crowns or more). At the same time, focus on boosting your population some more, and putting them to work amassing wood, iron, and, if you have it, stone. Start making weapons until you can arm about 500 men—preferably 200 archers, 200 pikemen, and 100 macemen. Use your gold to buy the raw materials with which to make weapons, rather than just buying the weapons, which is more expensive.

With this army, go and conquer a neighboring neutral county. Then build that up until it, too, is happy and healthy. At about 800 or more peasants, build another stone castle, and continue.

When you have four or five counties with stone castles, start amassing a large army—say 1,000 armed soldiers. Then

you should be able to go on the offensive and walk through most opposition.

The Hermit's Approach

This approach is by far the most conservative. Build up your county until the population is about 600; then build the motte and bailey castle. This will provide some defense, and will also raise your tax revenues significantly. Then boost your population up to about 1,000 happy, healthy peasants—and upgrade the castle to a stone castle. Don't be frightened to buy the stone if you have no stone quarry in your county; you can sell wood or iron to raise more cash if you need to. Again, don't issue the order to build the castle until you have all the resources you need. Keep upgrading your castle until you have the Royal castle.

At each stage, ensure that you have at least two-thirds of the maximum garrison. Once you have the Royal castle well garrisoned, raise an army and branch out to conquer your neighbor—and follow the same conservative approach there.

The Royal castle, well protected, is a very formidable defense. This strategy almost guarantees that your opponents

will sit back and fight among themselves for awhile. It also provides you with a very rich tax income stream with which to build up more castles and armies for future use.

Under this strategy, you will need to use your judgment as to when to go on the offensive; wait too long, and your opponents could also become extremely strong. On the other hand, with such a formidable defense, why bother attacking when it will cost them a very large number of casualties to come and take you out? Often the best time to march out to conquer is when your opponents have just finished some vicious battles, and have few weapons and depleted counties. Such victory can be so sweet!

Running an Empire

In many ways, *Lords of the Realm II* is several games in one: a game of kingdom management, a game of conquest, and a battle game. This guide discusses each of these areas—but there are some techniques and tools that really only come into their own when you have an empire of three or four (or more) counties to run.

Specialization

Once you have several counties in your kingdom, you will appreciate ways of managing each much more quickly. By having each county focus on just one industry, you can easily manipulate that county with a minimum of fuss—just by moving the slider bar. Not only is there less physical mouse clicking involved, there is also much clearer information; you won't need to try to work out how much wood, or whatever, is being manufactured by which county. And of course, if you're playing with Advanced Farming on, then efficiency matters a great deal, and specialization becomes almost essential.

Radar Map Overlays

With a large kingdom, you will usually have several counties in very good shape, some in OK shape, and some in need of plenty of love and care. It is all too easy to relax and forget about the counties that are doing well—and to do so can be quite ugly. Plague can hit, or wolves can eat your herd and throw off your food and labor allocation at the drop of a hat. Using the overlays for rations, you can see at a glance whether

or not each county is being fed as you wish them to be. As soon as a county is highlighted in red, you know you have a problem, and you can go and investigate.

Distribution

Wagons will fast become a favored tool with larger empires. There is bound to be one or more counties in trouble somewhere in most kingdoms, and using wagons to send spare cattle or grain to where they're needed is a huge boon. A good tactic is to send a wagon of grain to several different counties just to spread your stores around (in case of a bad attack by rats or pillagers in a county).

Many players also like to send small supplies of food to a county that they're about to attack. Although the supplies will be lost if you don't take the county, using them to kickstart a newly-conquered county can give you a huge advantage over smaller, weaker conquerors who must build their new conquests up more slowly.

Always try to ship cattle around to counties rather than buying new cows. They breed fast enough for even just a few

cows to grow into a strong herd in a reasonably short time. Removing cattle from a county with plenty of cows is usually quite good for crowding levels anyway.

Wagons can be a good way of reducing your need for merchants, since they are often not around when you want them. Since wagons are fairly slow at travelling from place to place, you may want to send them ahead whenever you have spare resources, just in case of need.

Castle Building

Castles are very useful in *Lords II*, not just for defense, but also for boosting tax revenues. It is a good idea to ready enough raw materials to build a stone castle (the smallest really defensible castle) before you attack a county; then, as soon as you conquer it, you can construct a castle much faster than your enemies.

Another useful tactic for reasonable empires can be to assign ALL labor in a county to amassing the raw materials and then building a castle. I often ship food in (or buy it if a merchant happens by at the right time) while I'm building a castle, just to reduce the quantity of turns it takes to complete construction.

This is too dangerous for most small kingdoms, and again, gives the larger kingdom a major advantage. I learned this tactic right after losing two counties, each one turn away from completing their stone castles. The enemy completed the castles, and received the free garrisons that should have been mine!

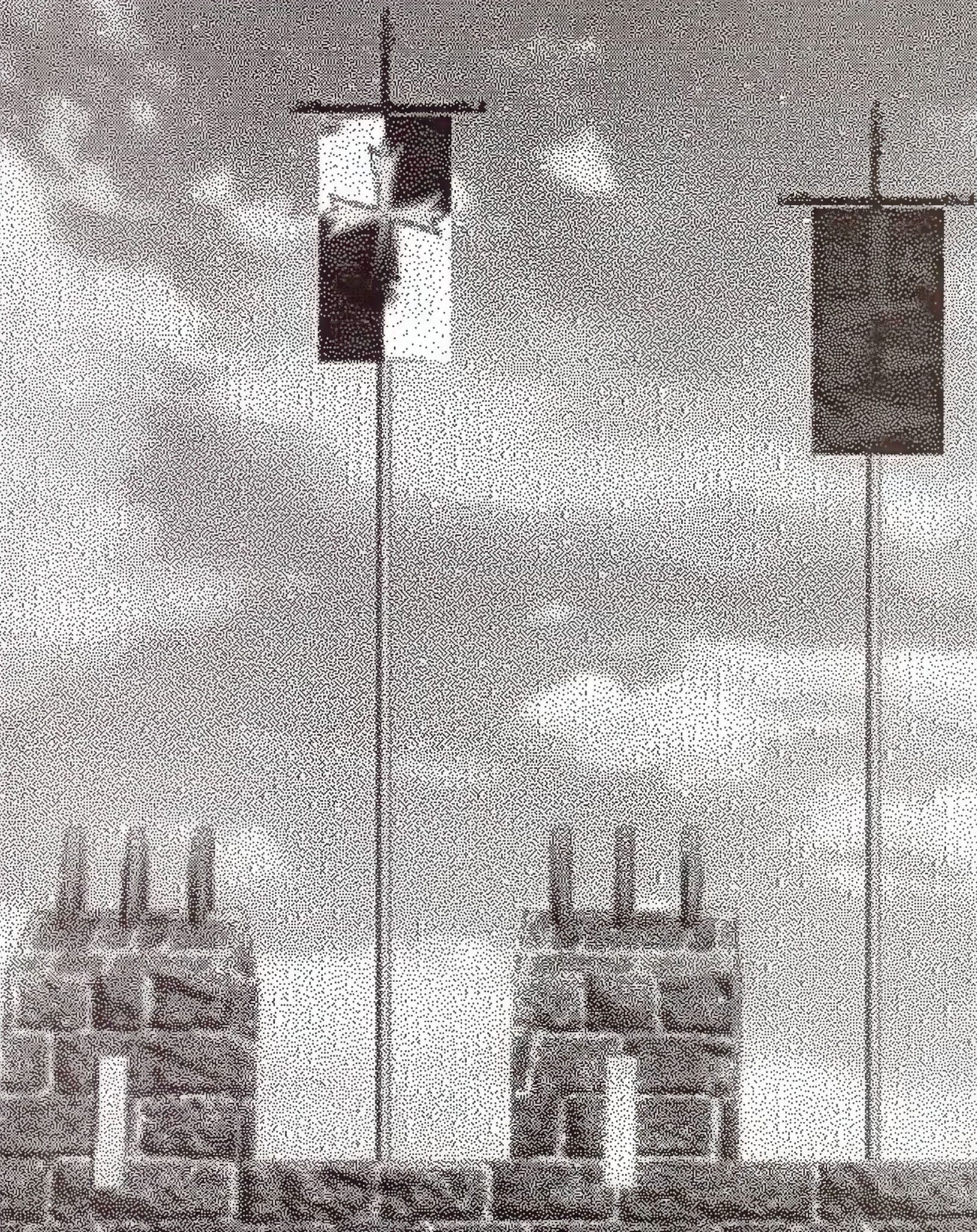
Taxes

Make use of the fact that some resources are held globally (gold crowns, iron, wood, stone and weapons) while happiness and health and population vary for each county. Taxes and raising an army both bring happiness down—and happiness falling below a certain level can cause real problems. If you have enough counties, say six or more, you can use one for tax raising (use the one with the largest castle for maximum effect) and another for army raising. This way, you can replenish the army source with zero taxes while still receiving a good tax income from your other county.

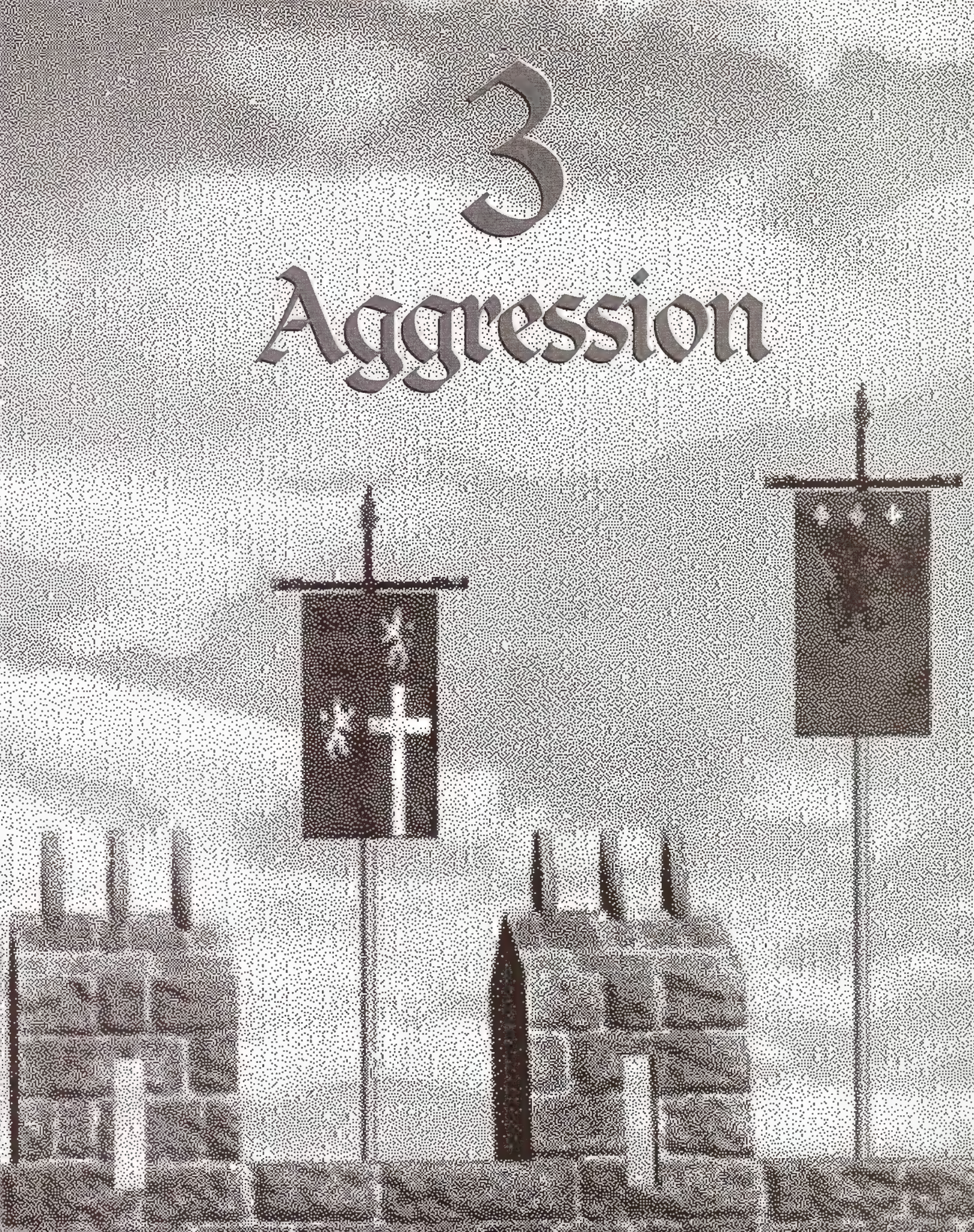
Tactical Withdrawal

The more counties you have, the more you can afford to lose any one of them, if necessary. You should be free to be cold

and calculating when a county comes under attack—there is no need to risk everything for your seventh county. Use wagons to ship the produce of the county back to one of your other counties, then put the tax rate way up and set *all* the labor in the county to resource production. The enemy will conquer a fairly unhappy county, and you will be able to reconquer it easily enough with the wagon-boost your neighboring county will receive. Be careful to choose which counties to hold onto, though—a rich county with a large population can prove costly to retake later on.



3 Aggression



Even though economic management and diplomacy are critical to total victory, there is no denying that if you don't succeed on the battlefield, you will never be crowned King. Indeed, raising armies in the proper proportions and managing them in battle can be the most important (and fun) aspect of *Lords of the Realm II.* This chapter will teach you how to raise armies that will be effective in all terrains and against all armies. It will also help you to manage sieges from both perspectives.

Armies

Bluntly put, building a very large and powerful army (or armies) is the best way to achieve your ultimate goal. As Sun Tzu said in his 3,000-year-old landmark book, *The Ancient Art of War,* you should always strive to attack with at least a 3-1 advantage. Although that often won't be possible, having large (and well-balanced) armies will help tilt the odds in your favor.

Raising an Army

Raising an army is accomplished through conscription of your peasant population, the hiring of mercenaries, or both. The

Figure 3-1
Although army composition is a matter of preference, it is almost always a good idea to have a combination of ranged and hand-to-hand units.

makeup of your army is determined by the availability of weaponry, which you can either purchase or forge yourself with your blacksmith. The size of the army you raise is limited by the population of the county in which you're trying to raise it, as well as the happiness rating.

Although it won't take you long to learn what each unit is responsible for in *Lords of the Realm II*, you'll find it a useful resource to be able to just flip through these few pages and see the details carefully spelled out.

Starting from Scratch

An army must contain at least 50 men, and cannot exceed 1500 men; army wages are a major factor in determining the number of soldiers you'll want under your command. All soldiers that are actively conscripted into armies will cost you a set amount of gold for every turn in which they exist. So you'll want to be sure not to take all the population of a county, only to find that you've destroyed your tax base and can no longer support the army you just raised.

In the first few turns, an army of around 200–300 soldiers is a decent starting point. At this early stage, you need not be concerned with buying or making weapons because you start the game with swords and longbows.

Once you have captured one or two new counties and are receiving new tax revenue and weapon production, you can start thinking about adding to your army's size. It is often beneficial to build small (<150) armies over several turns (and from several counties) and then join them into one large army later. This technique minimizes the effects on happiness and the labor force in your growing counties. Your serfs remember

conscription for up to a year—so try to raise small armies every four or five turns, no more.

Obtaining Weapons

Weaponry is either produced by your blacksmith or purchased from a merchant. It is usually a good idea to produce weapons within one or two counties, with the rest concentrating on producing wood and iron. There are a number of strategies as to how to go about building up an arsenal of weapons, but there are three basic choices you can consider.

Homebody

Put your labor resources into blacksmithing, along with producing iron and wood, therefore making all your own weapons at no cost (in gold). This method tends to be a little slow, but enables you to build expensive weapons such as crossbows and knights without having to fork out major bucks. However, if you take this strategy and put too many of your resources into squeezing weapons production out of each county, then you run the risk of having your food industry suffer. The end result could be that you'll have to buy food

from the merchant in order to keep your county healthy and happy. This can end up being almost as expensive as buying extra weapons from the merchant.

There is also a risk to this approach. Producing hundreds of weapons takes time—and if a neighbor decides to get aggressive, you may just find yourself without enough weaponry to defend yourself, and without a merchant from whom you can purchase more. Basically, if you can manage to keep your counties happy and productive, and there's no major threat from any other players, this method of amassing weaponry can be very successful. We recommend that if you take this approach, you should be sure to ally yourself, at least temporarily, with your closest opponents. Although this won't protect you 100%, it is an extra measure of safety that you cannot afford to pass up.

Pay and Play

Divert all labor that would normally be used for raw material mining and weapons manufacturing to food production. This creates larger tax-bearing populations so that you can subsequently buy all your weapons. In reality, however, this is

Table 3-1 Raw material cost per weapon

	Iron	Wood
Archers	0	13
Crossbow	10	6
Knights	8	1
Macemen	4	4
Peasants	0	0
Pikemen	3	6
Swordsmen	10	3

difficult to achieve. No matter how heavily you divert to food production, at some point there will be excess labor that might as well be used in making weapons. The theoretical extra revenue you could get from taxation and selling surplus foods could also be used to purchase and support mercenary armies.

It is quite possible to win the game following this strategy, but much care has to be taken to fully utilize food crops

and keep the population at a high level of happiness. The higher the happiness, the more you can tax, and the less likely your population is to emigrate to a happier county. One critical fly in the ointment of this method is the unpredictability of merchant wagons. Let's face it—there's no real way of predicting whether or not you'll have a merchant at your disposal when you really need one. However, there are often labor surpluses that will allow you to still produce some of your own weapons, making the "Pay and Play" method of weapon management an attractive proposition.

A Little of Both

As with all things in life, balance is king in *Lords II*. Equilibrium between monetary revenue and managing the food supply is the key to really kicking butt, enabling you to keep the happiness and health of your counties in decent shape while still acquiring a stockpile of weaponry for battle.

You can also divide the above three strategies individually among your various counties. Depending on the status of each area, you can shift the trends in order to maximize effectiveness. Whatever you do, be sure to acquire plenty of weaponry.

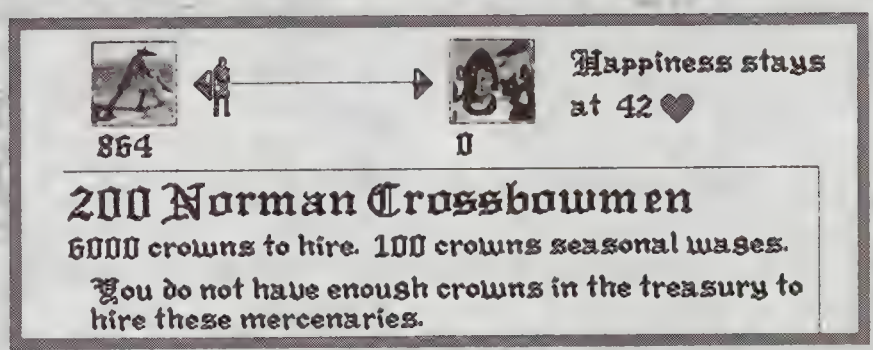
Mercenaries

Mercenaries can be very handy when raising an army, especially when you are about to defend a county or attack a tough opponent. The downside is that they are pretty darned expensive to hire. They also require a wage for every turn in which you use them, which can add up in a hurry. On the plus side, mercenaries do not reduce your population's happiness in any way, which can certainly be a consideration.

It is certainly possible to defeat *Lords of the Realm II* without even considering hiring mercenaries. Heck, mercenaries aren't even always available, and when they are, you are limited to whatever weapon they happen to be carrying. But once in a while, they can come in handy to bolster a sagging army,

Figure 3-2

Mercenaries can be very handy indeed, but if you intend to keep them around, the cost can be crippling.


864
0
Happiness stays at 42
200 Norman Crossbowmen
6000 crowns to hire. 100 crowns seasonal wages.
You do not have enough crowns in the treasury to hire these mercenaries.

or add that extra punch when defending a castle. They are especially effective late in a game when you are close to finishing the enemy off and (hopefully) have lots of extra cash. Remember, though, two groups of mercenary units can never be combined into one army.

Creating a Well-Balanced Army

To define a "well balanced" army is to delve into the psyche of the user playing the game. Even though the composition of any single army will depend on the strategic mind of the

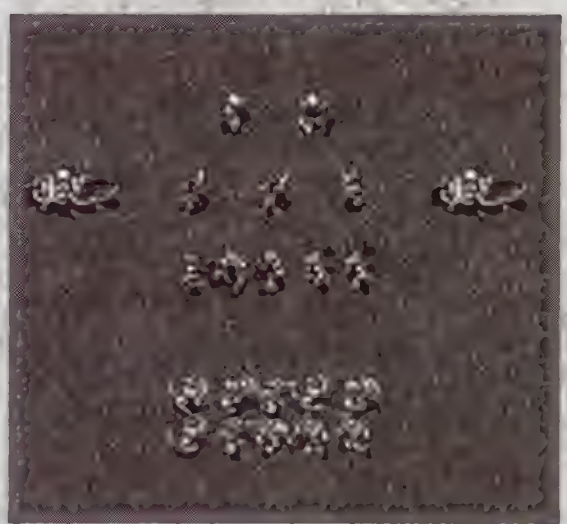


Figure 3-3

Ultimately, it's best to have an army with representatives from each discipline.

commander, the key is to have a well-balanced fighting force overall. As the game progresses, movement and other battle considerations are often best served by having just two or three different soldier types in any one army, and then moving armies which compliment each other in tandem.

Perhaps the single most important class of units is the ranged weapons (crossbows and archers). These units can reach the enemy from afar, and as long as they are protected from hand-to-hand combat they can inflict heavy damage when attacking in force. The side that owns the majority of ranged weapons often holds a substantial advantage. However, without proper units to block the enemy close range attacks, archers and crossbowmen are almost useless.

Pikemen are a very good choice for setting up a retaining wall for ranged weapons to hide behind, and likewise they are well-suited for siege defense. The pike keeps all but knights at bay long enough for your arrows to slice and dice the enemy. Pikemen are not particularly effective in other forms of combat, but are handy if you want to tie up enemy archers with hand-to-hand combat while your own archers move into position.

Peasants are great for creating diversions, tying up other peasants, and working to fill in moats during sieges. Having an army with large numbers of peasants may seem like a cheap way to raise a large army, but 100 macemen will make mincemeat out of 500 peasants in a very short amount of time. If you're going to include peasants in your ranks, don't let them exceed more than a quarter of your total army volume.

The hand-to-hand combat offensive units are the swordsmen, macemen, and knights. These are the units that you will most want to have in the thick of it, hacking up enemy soldiers. All of these units are very effective against archers, peasants, and, to a lesser degree, crossbows. They should be used to charge these inferior units whenever possible. If you can occupy a horde of peasants with a group of macemen, your ranged weapons can then help finish the job in peace and quiet. Knights are the most expensive, but also have the highest defense and attack ratings, and an impressive rate of movement. If you have a decent contingent of knights, you can quickly flank the enemy and take out the archers (just like in *Braveheart*) while your other troops engage the ground forces.

Battleground Tactics

Becoming a skilled *Lords II* tactition is an important aspect of learning to become King of the realm. There are 48 different battlefields, and myriad strategies for each one. Again, personal preference will dictate much of your strategy when on the battlefield, but there are a number of excellent tactics that will help you to defeat the enemy, even when substantially outnumbered.

Figure 3-4
The Battle Ensues

Taking the Offensive

Let's face it—if you didn't intend to win a battle, you'd just press the old retreat button and get the heck out of there. With the exception of being outnumbered 10:1 (or worse), your goal should be to win, and nothing else. With that in mind, you will need to know how to take advantage of the enemy's weaknesses and the various obstacles that dot the battlefields.

The first thing you should do once a battle begins is to pause the battle and take a good look at the terrain of the battle map. Use your mouse to scroll around the entire area so you can get a good look at everything. The next step should be organizing your units into groups. This is already done for you at the beginning of the battle, but you can reassign them as you like: This is achieved by selecting a group of units, then pressing Ctrl and a numbered key—1, 2, 3, or 4, etc. (Note: For the DOS version of the game, use Alt instead of Ctrl.)

With this method, you can assign up to 10 groups, which can then be accessed merely by pressing the corresponding number key. Doing this may take a few extra seconds, but in large battles, it immediately eliminates much of the micromanagement of selecting your troops during battle. It is

probably a good idea to give different kinds of troops the same number every battle so there is no confusion. For example, archers and crossbows are always 1, macemen 2, etc. Once this is set up, you can easily move groups of units around the map and complete complex flanking maneuvers by just selecting groups with the keyboard. You can also make these groups line up in horizontal or vertical lines just by pressing the H and V keys, respectively. Believe me, that's the best thing since sliced bread!

It is best to group units by speed, ability, and purpose. Ranged attackers should occupy one group, armed hand-to-hand combatants another, and peasants yet another group. If you happen to have large numbers of knights, it's also advantageous to make a group out of them.

Ranged Attack

As has been mentioned many times in this book, keeping your archers and crossbowmen behind a protective line of friendly troops (or well-protected by the natural terrain) is key to your success. Which troops you use to defend your ranged attackers depends on you, but pikemen are probably preferred, with

Figure 3-5

The "Archer Wall" is a protective line of soldiers which allows your ranged weapons to do what they do best.

swordsmen being the next most desirable. Sure, it's tempting to throw your peasants in as blockers, but if they're fighting against macemen, they'll be shredded in a jiffy. Even with a successful victory, you will have incurred heavy peasant losses. Don't forget, peasants don't grow on trees (as far as we know).

Whenever possible, use natural structures to separate your archers from hand-to-hand combat. Bridges, rocks, and rivers work very well for this purpose. If you can wedge your archers in between obstacles and blocker units, you will greatly increase your chances for success. Also, note that archers and crossbowmen cannot fire through forest. This fact can be utilized to give those forces some natural protection from the rear.

Flanking

The computer AI will often set its troops up in such a way that the archers are alone in a grouping somewhere behind the rest of the forces. Neutralizing the enemy's ranged attack is important if you want to minimize your losses. The best way to do this is to flank the enemy and use the flanking troops to take the archers out just after the combat begins. If you don't wait until your initial hand-to-hand forces engage before moving those knights for the backside, they may attract more attention than you'd like.

Figure 3-6

Keeping a group of speedy units available to hit the enemy on the flank is always prudent.

Due to their superb speed and solid power, knights are by far the best unit for a flanking maneuver. They are rather expensive, though, and can be either augmented or totally replaced with macemen, if need be. Macemen are the second fastest unit in the game, are inexpensive, and can cut through archers mercilessly. Generally, the enemy will allow you to move your troops around for a while before it attempts to engage you, so be sure to assign a number to the flanking force using the Ctrl # key method. This will enable you to activate your force quickly. Once it has moved into position a safe distance behind the enemy's backside, use ground forces to engage in a frontal assault with support from your ranged weapons. After the fighting begins, quickly move your flanking group to attack the enemy's archers/crossbows, or, if there are no ranged weapons, merely surround the enemy. This method is an excellent way to confuse the enemy army, and by minimizing unfriendly ranged weapons you will reduce your own casualties.

Weapon Matchups

Many units perform better against specific troops. Macemen, for example, go through archers and peasants like the proverbial

hot knife through butter. Knights are generally difficult to defeat, but are susceptible to ranged attacks from crossbows. The following table should help to give you an idea of how to match up your units against enemy troops. Note that peasants are doormats and should only be used in emergency situations or against other peasants.

Battlefield Tips

- In combat against the AI, the AI will attack by swarming around your closest units with every available man. Therefore, it's best to set up your units in a single-file horizontal or vertical line.

- Use blocker units such as swordsmen, pikemen or peasants in this first line. If blocker units are grouped in a box, the units in the interior cannot be used for defense, so keep them in a line. Then place a line of ranged units several squares behind the blockers to fire on the attackers without fear of being attacked. Then bait the AI's army or armies with an archer by moving the archer up and firing on the enemy units. When the enemy takes the bait and comes

Table 3-2 Weapons Matchup

	Effective Against	Ineffective Against	Draw
Archers	All Units*	All Units Except K and Pe**	A
Crossbows	All Units*	K**, M, S, Pi**	C
Knights	All Units	C*	K
Macemen	Pe, A/C**	K, Pi	S, M
Peasants	Pe	All Units Except Pe	Pe
Pikemen	Pe, A/C**	K	M, S, Pi
Swordsmen	All Units	K	M, S

*When ranged attack
**When in hand-to-hand combat

Legend

A=Archers
C=Crossbows
K=Knights
M=Macemen
Pe=Peasant
Pi=Pikemen (or 3.14)
S=Swordsmen

after the archer, keep on moving the archer back towards your lines until the AI engages the rest of your forces.

- If no archers are available, use a technique known as "lighting the fuse." Place a line of peasants single file with several squares between them, leading away from the bulk of your forces. This is especially effective on a battlefield that contains bridges where the enemy has a quantitative (i.e. lots of peasants) but not qualitative advantage against you.

- Use bridges to your advantage at all times. By placing your strongest units (such as swordsmen) side-by-side on a bridge, the enemy can attack with only two units (which are often peasants) at a time, and which do not perform well against your stronger units.

- Hide your archers/crossbows behind a blockaded bridge (blocking troops) or other natural obstacles in order to maximize their effectiveness.

- Bring plenty of knights and split them off from your main force. This way, you—the "cavalry"—can perform a (quick) flanking attack or rear attack. This is especially good for

taking out a line of ranged units that are otherwise inaccessible behind another line of defensive blockers.

- Form a "tortoise" of archers/crossbows in a square, with defensive blockers around them (or if you don't have enough blockers to completely cover all four sides, put them along the one or two sides which the enemy will most likely attack).

Defensive Tactics

Occasionally, you'll get attacked by a pesky enemy with a vastly superior force, both in terms of quality and size. If you are grossly outnumbered, and then engage in a free-for-all, you will most certainly lose all your forces in short order without doing any substantial damage to your adversary. When it is clear that you must fight but cannot win, the goal must then be to take out as many enemy troops as possible before all your men bite the dust.

Bridges and Other Obstacles (Your Friends)

When you are vastly outnumbered, quickly locate the most defensible area on the battle map and prepare to make a stand.

If you're lucky, you will end up on a map where only one bridge separates you from your nemesis. In this situation, you can block the bridge and wait for the enemy to come to you. Once they start attacking at the bridge, you can use ranged weapons to destroy as many enemy units as possible.

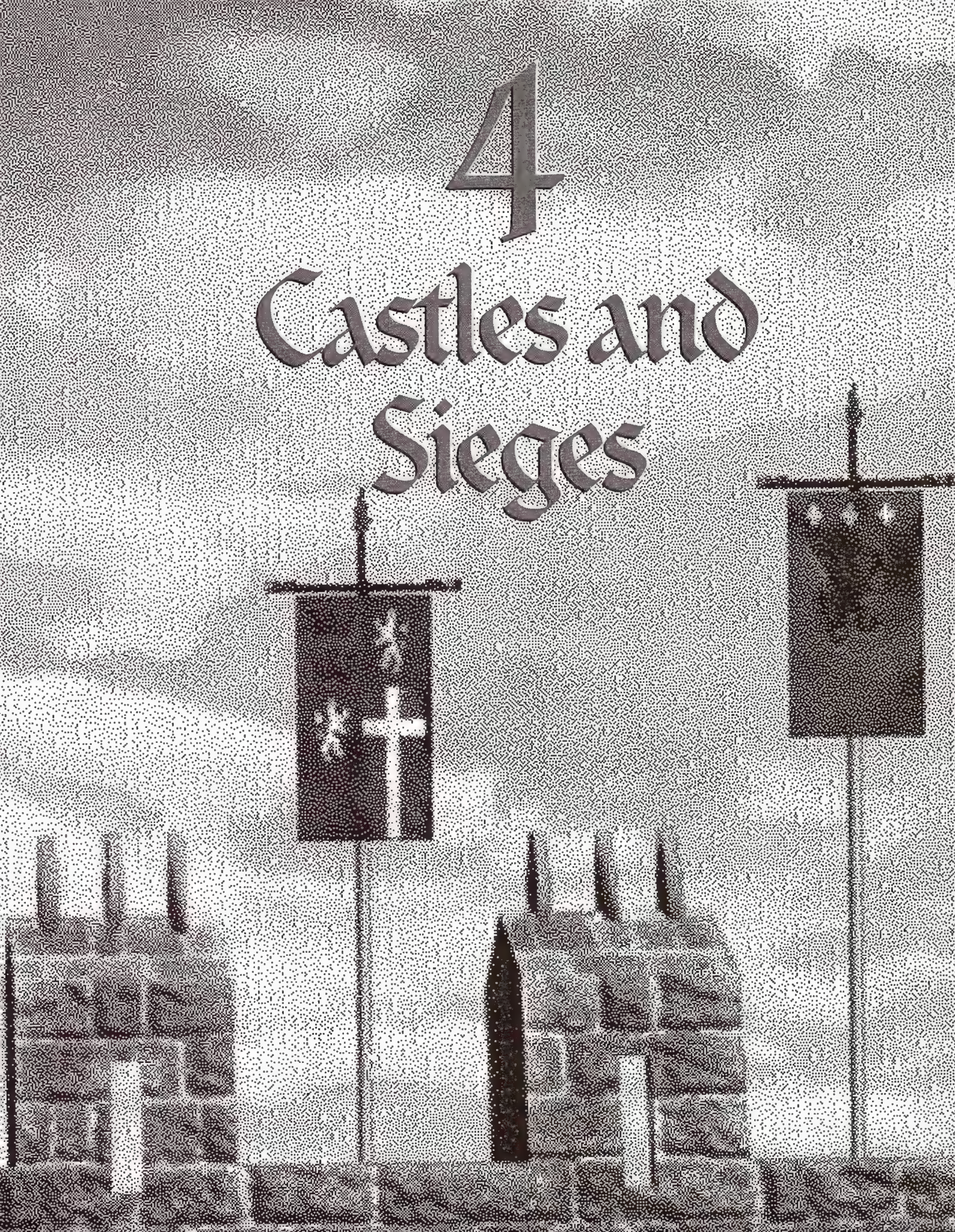
Some maps have forests or rocks that are impassable to all units. Backing yourself into one of the pockets of these formations can often provide a very good way to keep your

Figure 3-7

Bridges provide an excellent way to exploit a ranged weapon superiority. By slowing your enemies with peasants, you can use your archers/ crossbows safely from afar.

ranged weapons safe while maximizing enemy losses. Whenever possible, try to isolate weak enemy units like peasants and archers in hand-to-hand combat with your macemen or swordsmen. If you can do this, you might be able to get a large number of casualties before the enemy trounces you.

4
Castles and Sieges



Though many of the battles in *Lords II* are fought on relatively open ground, just as many involve an assault on a castle of some type. Each of the various castles offer a range of benefits, with the determining factor being the amount of time and gold you are willing and able to invest.

Wooden Palisade

Resources Needed	n/a
Tax Revenue Boost	50%
Oil	n/a

The wooden palisade is a simple and relatively inexpensive circular fortress made entirely of wood. There is no moat surrounding this smallest of castles, and it will quickly crumble under a catapult barrage or battering ram attack. However, it will provide some measure of extra defense and could give you the edge you need when outnumbered. Its main advantage is the tax boost it provides.

Motte and Bailey

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 75%

Oil n/a

The motte and bailey (dating from around the 9th century) is one of the oldest castle models known. This structure was usually built on a mound and fenced in by a pair of circular walls, and sometimes (as is the case in *Lords II*), at least a portion of the castle is surrounded by a moat. Although structurally, the motte and bailey really doesn't provide any greater measure of protection over the palisade, the moat around the rear hoop provides for a superior defensive position. If enemy troops come in through the front, they must pass through a narrow passage to get to your flag. If they can't accomplish that, they'll have to get their shovels warmed up and start filling in that moat!

Norman Keep

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 100%

Oil n/a

The Norman keep is a straightforward square tower structure, built primarily from stone, which ranks in the middle of the pack when it comes to defensive capabilities. For you historical buffs, the White Tower in the Tower of London is an original Norman keep. This castle sports two gates between its front and rear portions, often forcing the enemy to bring a battering ram inside the castle walls. The rear section is elevated beyond the reach of siege towers, thus providing an extra measure of safety for the precious flag. All of the walls of the keep provide an excellent platform from which archers can stick it to the enemy.

Stone Castle

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 125%

Oil n/a

The stone castle is a much more formidable castle to lay siege against. It has six turrets that are all too high for a siege tower to reach, and these raised sections are impervious to catapult attack. This castle is built entirely from stone, and the flag is housed in a raised area that is at least two gates away from your forces. If you are greatly outnumbered when laying siege to a stone castle, you're in for plenty of heartache. Between the excellent archer and crossbow positions which the turrets afford, the moat and the burning oil, you'd best be ready for a challenge.

Royal Castle

Resources Needed n/a

Tax Revenue Boost 150%

Oil n/a

This is the largest of the castles and is surrounded entirely by a moat. There are nine turrets (each with oil), two gates (only one can be accessed by a ram), plenty of room for enemy troops, and an ominous central tower which looms over the battlefield. If the enemy has any decent garrison at all in the castle, you'll have to use all your savvy to successfully capture the flag without enduring heavy losses.

Sieges

Of course, you're not always going to wind up on the inside of a castle looking out. Just as often, you're likely to be tasked with laying siege to a castle, and there are some things you should consider when that time comes.

As mentioned previously, there are five separate castles in *Lords of the Realm II*, ranging from simple wooden palisades

Figure 4-1
General Siege Screen

to moat-ridden royal castles. Castles provide substantial benefits to both the attacker and defender, if the advantages and disadvantages of each structure can be properly exploited. It isn't unheard of for an army outnumbered 5:1 to successfully defend a castle from a siege. Likewise, a large defensive garrison is of no value if the castle's flag is captured.

On the Offensive (Sieges)

The first thing you'll need to do when preparing to besiege a castle is to choose which siege weapons you want at your

disposal. Although this is largely a matter of personal preference, some units are not entirely effective against certain castles. For example, the stone and royal castles boast a narrowing past their outside gates which prevents a battering ram from moving inside the castle walls. For this reason, you may not want to build more than one battering ram, but rather to put your efforts into catapults or siege towers.

Figure 4-2

This is the screen where you must decide which siege weapons to produce.

When laying siege to a castle, you can often gain an advantage by setting out to build more siege weapons than you'll actually need or use. Then, when you have built the number you really need to do the job, commence the siege. This keeps your opponent off balance by fooling him/her into thinking he/she has more time to further garrison or upgrade the castle. The 'siege indicator' above the castle will indicate three more turns until the siege commences, then whammo! You hit the enemy before expected.

As soon as the siege begins, you should send a battering ram to work on the front gate, no matter which structure you're attacking. The enemy will bring archers (and maybe other units) forward in an attempt to destroy the ram, so provide some covering fire, and have a back-up ram ready just in case the first doesn't survive the initial assault. With your archers throwing hundreds of arrows at the castle, your enemy will be hard-pressed to give more than token resistance once the battering ram has broken through, and your macemen are racing to take the flag. You can also use the catapult to pound a hole in the side of the castle, and have the siege tower dock on the castle wall simultaneously with the front gate being

destroyed. This combination approach opens several avenues for your attack, and most enemies will crumble under the pressure of a three-sided assault. Using the siege weapons in combination is always beneficial, except when there's a moat.

If you are outnumbered with ranged weapons and you don't want to get close to the walls for fear of being shredded, it's best to use a catapult (or two) to knock some holes in the walls of the castle. Once this is accomplished, you can send your quick macemen/knights in to storm the archers/crossbows and take them out easily in hand-to-hand combat. Your archers can then approach in support.

Important! Don't forget that each castle has a flag, which, if captured, will promptly end the battle and give you an automatic victory. Setting up diversionary attacks while a few select units climb a siege tower en route to the flag is a common strategy which will work more often than not. Grabbing the flag early can save you hundreds of lives and considerable damage to a castle that you'll just have to repair anyway. Whenever possible, go for the flag with your fast units (macemen, knights).

Offensive Siege Tips

- Get to know each castle and which type of siege equipment is most effective in allowing access to its interior.
- Use catapults to isolate castle towers by destroying the walls on either side of the tower. The defender will often be forced to abandon the tower. Once a section of the wall is undefended, peasants can fill in the moat without being harassed.
- Ranged weapons are even more important in sieges than in battle. As the attacker or defender, always place melee units (read 'cannon fodder') in front of your archers to prevent casualties from enemy fire.
- Siege equipment is very vulnerable to attack from crossbowmen.
- Load up on plenty of peasants (more than 200) to fill in moats if you are laying siege to a moat-surrounded castle. Pikemen are also excellent moat-diggers, as they have much better defense than peasants, though they cost significantly more.

- Watch out for oil when your archers are close to the castle walls. Oil finishes off archers particularly quickly.
- Go for the flag whenever possible. Getting the castle's flag early can save you hundreds of lives that would otherwise be lost fighting the enemy to the death.
- When filling in a moat, it's always a good idea to keep a couple hundred archers nearby. The activity of your peasants shoveling near the castle walls will usually draw

Figure 4-3

It's a good idea to keep a gaggle of peasants handy to fill in the moats on the larger castles. Although other troops can do this, they are very expensive for such a mundane task.

attention, and when the enemy units come to investigate, they will be cut to pieces by your archers.

Protecting Against Sieges

Although none of us like to admit it, once in a while, an enemy army makes it inside your county and lays siege to your castle. At this point, it's truly a do-or-die situation, and if the enemy wins the siege, then the county becomes their property. If you prepare properly though, you can make the enemy eat a sizable chunk of humble pie, and the longer they wait to dig in, the worse it's gonna taste.

The first thing you should do with a healthy, productive county is to build yourself a castle (if you haven't already done so). You needn't fill it to the hilt with soldiers immediately, as long as you can quickly raise the men you need when a threat appears. Because of the height/distance advantage that all castles provide, it's best to implement a minimum 3:1 (or even 4:1) ratio of ranged weapons over hand-to-hand weapons. You MUST try to reduce the enemy's attacking force from afar before they breach your castle walls if you want victory. If

it comes down to hand-to-hand combat inside the castle, and you're outnumbered, you probably can't ever win.

After you have a castle and a decent garrison standing by, it's usually prudent to begin upgrading your castle. You don't necessarily have to go straight to a royal castle, but moving from a wooden palisade to a stone castle with a moat can make all the difference in the world, not to mention the tax increase you'll see. The extra money you earn from the upgraded castle can help pay for the increase in garrison size you'll need to protect the new castle.

When the enemy troops do finally begin their attack on your castle's walls, be sure to keep your oil handy and place your archers up on the walls en masse. This will often keep the enemy from hanging around close to the wall. If they decide to storm the gate, you can simultaneously hit them with ranged weapons and horrendous boiling oil. Boiling oil can be one of your best friends when defending a castle. Just the threat of it will often keep the enemy from coming anywhere near your castle with sensitive troops. Often, the enemy will merely move their catapults or battering rams into place without risking any

of their foot soldiers. Once in a while, however, a crowd of several hundred peasants will rush the gates, and a couple of pots of boiling oil can reduce their numbers by more than half.

Protect your flag at all costs! Even though it may be tempting to throw everything you've got at the enemy, it's always a good idea to keep a couple of decent fighting units (like swordsmen) behind in defense of the flag. Remember, if you lose the flag, the battle ends right there no matter how close you were to turning the siege back.

Figure 4-4

The use of boiling oil can be either an exhilarating experience or a way to get burned. No matter which side you're on, it's a hotly contested issue.

Defensive Siege Tips

- Garrison your home castle.
- A good rule of thumb for garrisoning is to have 60-75% of the garrisoned army as archers and/or crossbowmen for ranged fire, and the remainder as defensive "blocker" troops such as swordsmen or pikemen (although peasants will suffice in a pinch).
- When garrisoning a castle, place a sizable contingent of crossbowmen inside, the better to deal with battering rams.
- It can also be a good idea to attack any army that's preparing to besiege one of your castles, just to whittle down the enemy numbers. Of course, you don't want to send anyone out to the field of battle that would fight more effectively from atop the castle wall.
- If you can upgrade or build a new castle, make one that has a moat. Castles with a moat and archers can inflict hideous losses on attackers before they even have a chance to engage you in combat.

Individual Castle Siege Strategies

Every castle in *Lords of the Realm II* inspires a different attack and defense strategy, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Before you begin ingesting unhealthy amounts of boiling oil, make sure you know what you're up against.

Wooden Palisade

Attacking: This is the simplest form of castle you will encounter in *Lords II*. It is constructed almost entirely from wood, and is rudimentary in design with a small central tower surrounded by a circular wall. There are two square turrets protruding on either side of the front gate.

The palisade is an easy structure to assault with any of the siege weapons—in fact, you don't even need a siege weapon to win the battle. It is usually preferable to send siege towers to two separate locations and storm the central tower. If you are attacking with more than 250 troops, the task should be fairly straightforward as the palisade only houses a 150-man garrison at best.

Defending: Due to the rather small 150-soldier garrison limit and the simple structure, the palisade can be a real challenge to defend when a large army comes knocking. The best recommendation is to make sure the flag is secure and line the walls with archers. You will only get one unit of boiling oil with this castle, so placing it carefully is extra important. Generally, you'll need all the help you can get.

Motte and Bailey

Attacking: The motte and bailey is constructed in a similar manner to the palisade, but differs in layout (there are two circular sections joined by a narrow corridor). It also adds the problem of a moat surrounding the rear portion of the structure. Perhaps the best way to attack this structure is to move your peasants to a portion of the moat and start filling it in. At the same time, move your archers in behind the peasants for support. While that is going on, you should take down the front door with a battering ram, followed by a storming of the front portion of the castle with macemen and swordsmen/knights. Once this is accomplished, the moat will be filled in and you can use a siege tower to gain access to the flag—or

you can follow your killer instinct and just block the enemy forces in the corridor and move your archers in for the kill.

Defending: The moat and narrow corridor separating the two sections of the motte and bailey provide the most advantage in this castle. The computer will rarely attempt to attack over a moat, making it easy for you to line the walls of the front portion of the castle with archers until the gate is opened. At that time, you can simply move your troops back into the rear portion of the castle. By blocking the narrow corridor, you can engage the enemy troops in limited hand-to-hand combat while you shower them with arrows from behind.

Norman Keep

Attacking: The Norman keep is the weakest of the castles made from stone, but still provides a much greater degree of challenge when it comes to laying siege. The Norman keep has two distinct sections, the rear of which is raised and cannot be accessed by siege towers or damaged by catapults. The only way to reach the flag in a Norman keep is to get through the second of two gates. The first gate can be circumvented by a

siege tower or destroying the walls with a catapult, but you must go through the rear gate in order to meet your objective. The enemy nearly always keeps at least a couple units in the rear of the castle (by the flag).

The best way to take care of this situation is to attack the front portion of the keep with a battering ram, siege towers, and ranged attacks. Watch out for the oil, which your foe won't hesitate to use if you get too close to the castle walls. The best way to deal with oil is to storm the oil units and occupy them while attacking the other units. Bring in your archers from the back to support you as you bang away on the second gate. Once you gain access to the upper area of the castle, you should be able to make it to the flag before all the enemy soldiers are eliminated.

Defending: The keep is an excellent defensive structure. The rear portion is not accessible except through the second gate. From this forward raised position, a large contingent of archers can mow down a substantial portion of advancing forces. If you also move the boiling oil into the rear portion of the

Figure 4-5

Keeping the enemy troops outside the inner gate will allow you to take out the maximum number of enemy troops with your ranged weapons.

keep, you can have an extra ultra-potent weapon when enemy troops come knocking at the door.

Generally, the best defensive strategy is to move your archers up on the front turrets of the keep and take out as many enemies as possible until the front gate falls. Keep a couple units behind the front gate to prevent a rush into the castle. When the gates fall, move all your troops (except the ones at the front gate) into the rear portion of the castle. If you've followed the

instructions to keep a 75%-to-25% archer/crossbow to hand-to-hand unit ratio, your ranged units will probably successfully defend the keep, even against much larger armies.

Stone Castle

Attacking: The stone castle presents several new problems for the attacker. The castle is larger and can hold a garrison of 400 troops. It is entirely surrounded by a moat and many substantial turrets which are impervious to catapult attack. Add to this the fact that it's difficult to advance past the front gate due to a special narrowing of the entranceway, and you've got a much tougher nut to crack.

The key to defeating a fully-garrisoned stone castle is to have plenty of peasants handy (and archers to back them up) to fill in the moat in several locations at the same time. If you can provide a crossing point at the front gate and on two of the remaining three sides, then you can gain access with the help of siege towers, or catapults. If you don't have the manpower to fill in the moat anywhere beside the gate area, you can use a catapult to open a hole somewhere else in the structure; simply

march your troops around the inside of the moat to the penetration point.

The flag is usually located in the rear left-hand circular turret, but is often very well defended. If the enemy has a substantial force, it's best to take up position in the castle and use the standard 'archers behind blockers' tactic as you advance to the flag.

Figure 4-6

The castle flag is often located in the rear left turret. Be sure to keep several units around to defend the flag.

Defending: This castle gives you the second best assortment of vantage points for your ranged soldiers. If you've assembled your forces well, you'll have a pile of archers/crossbows, and can pack them densely on the walls to take out any advancing troops before they make it past the narrow gate. Expect to lose the gate, but not until the enemy has lost considerable forces from filling in the moat under a shower of arrows. Use a couple of pikemen or knights to block the narrow area past the gate. If the enemy rushes any area of the castle, just pour on the boiling oil in droves. This should make a huge dent in the enemy manpower.

Royal Castle

Attacking: Unfortunately, the only positive situation you can hope for when attacking this largest of castles is if your enemy has neglected to properly garrison it. If the garrison within the castle walls is anywhere near the 600-soldier limit, you will have your hands full indeed.

The royal castle boasts a double gate (with the inner gate safe from battering rams), plenty o' boiling oil, spacious rounded turrets, and a raised inner tower (which houses the

Figure 4-7
The royal castle is the ultimate *Lords II* fortress. The moat and double gate protect both you and the flag.

flag) that is protected by a second gate. Add to this a freshwater moat surrounding the entire structure, and you've got yourself a challenge. As with the stone castle, the best way to attack this structure is to hit it in multiple locations simultaneously. This will require you to have peasants filling in the moat while being supported with ranged weaponry. This castle is equipped with a lot of oil, so you'll need to be careful whenever you get close to the castle walls.

Once you've successfully penetrated the inner walls of the castle, you will need plenty of strong hand-to-hand combat

forces (swordsmen/knights/macemen) to deal with the bulk of the garrison troops and to pound away at the inner gate. The only way to open the inner gate is to pound it down with your soldiers, thus exposing them to ranged attack from above. It's a good idea to put some archers on the turrets opposite the inner tower to occupy any ranged units atop the tower. Once you break into the inner tower, getting to the flag shouldn't be a problem.

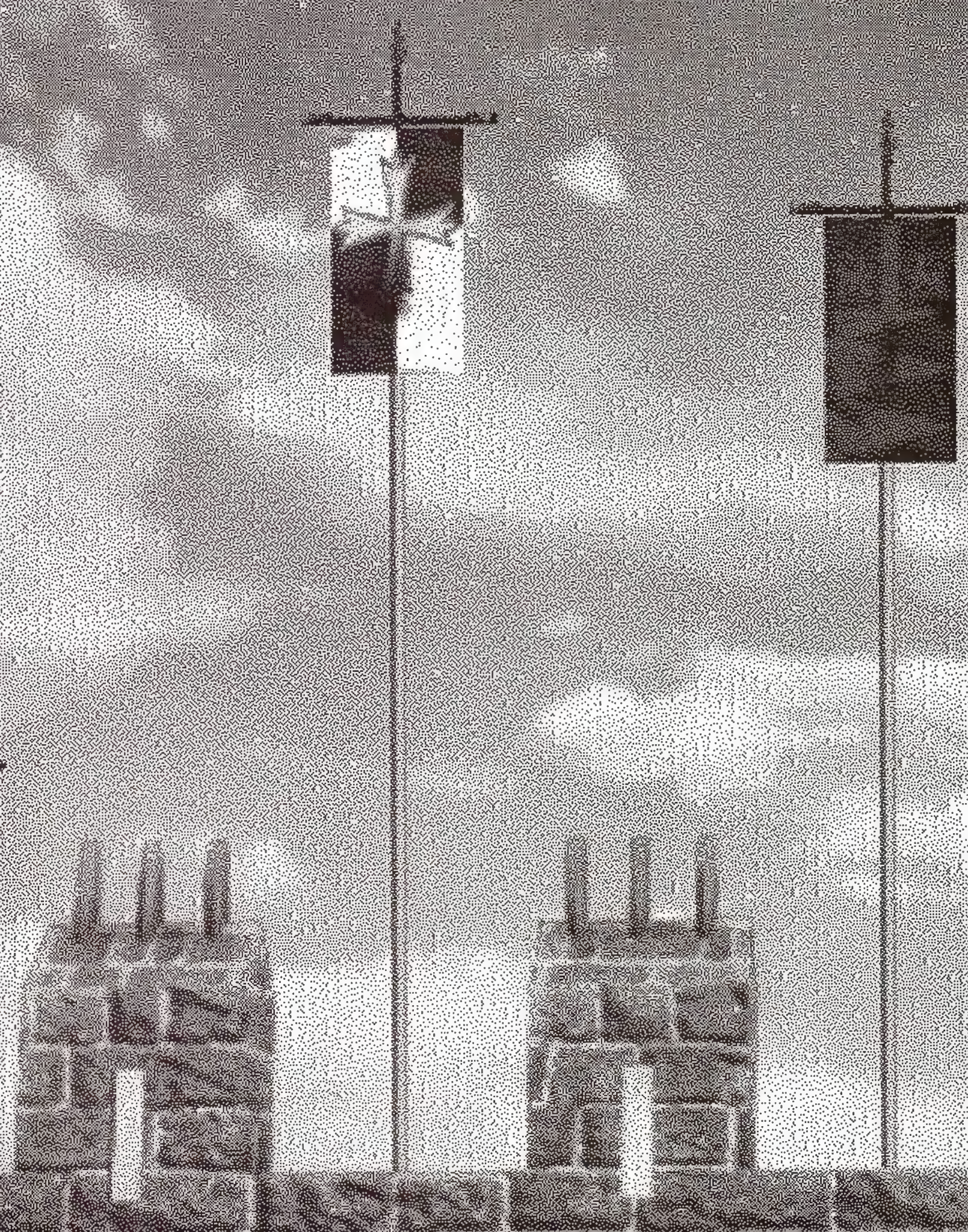
Defending: This is the king of castles when it comes to defending. The only thing you need to worry about is equipping this fortress with the maximum 600 troops it can hold. Again, make sure that at least two-thirds of these troops are ranged weapons, with the remainder being high-level hand-to-hand fighters. Peasants are of little use to you in these situations.

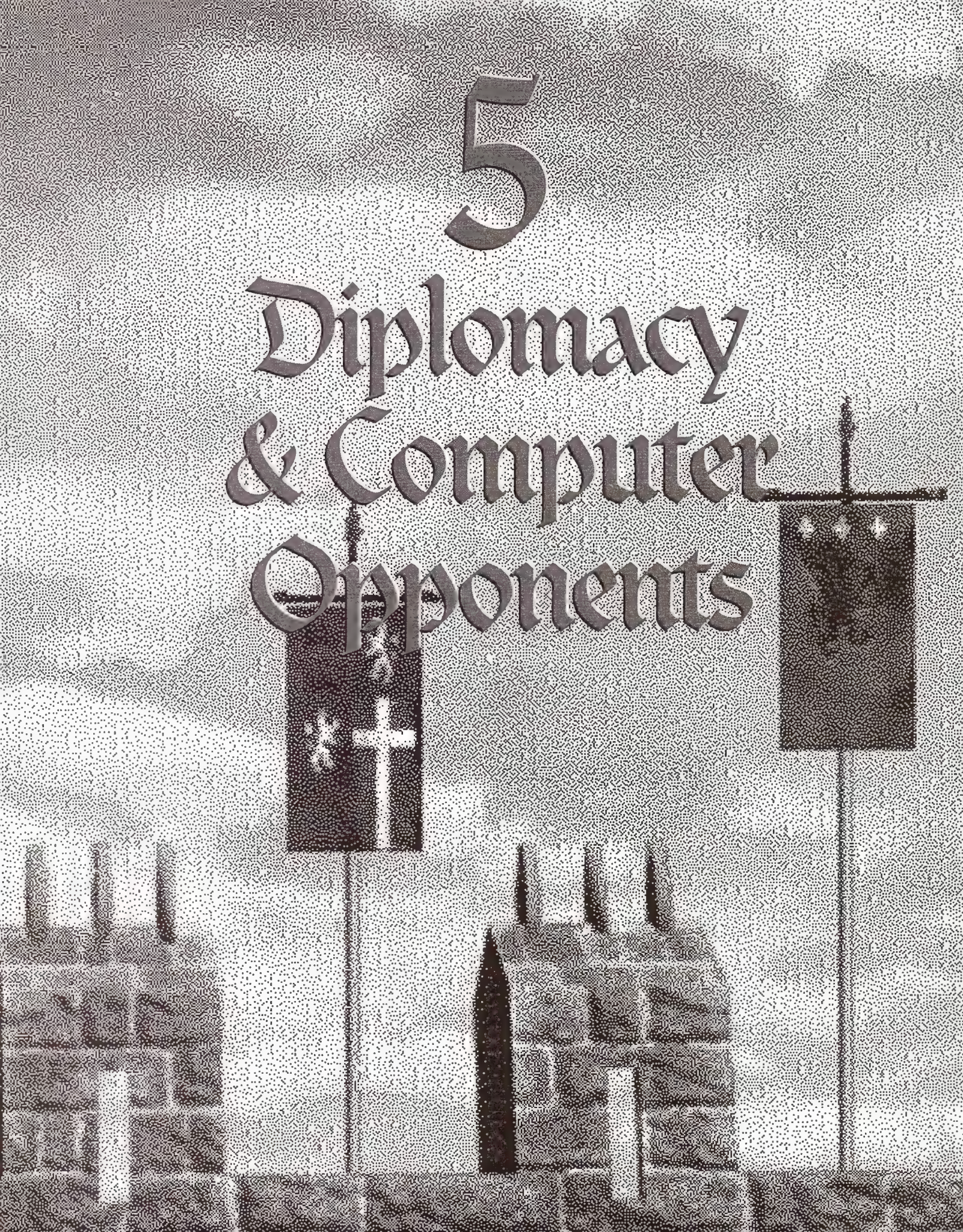
Basically, wherever the enemy begins to fill in the moat, you move in with your ranged weapons and rip them to shreds. If the enemy puts up a fight, don't be afraid to use your oil when they get close to the walls. If it looks like the enemy will break through the first line of defense and enter the courtyard,

Figure 4-8

Royal Screen

move your ranged weapons and 50-100 swordsmen/pikemen into the central tower, making sure that the archers are not near the door. If the inner tower door collapses you want your pikemen/swordsmen to be the first to meet the aggressors while your archers/crossbows hit them from behind. It also often pays to move a cauldron of oil or two up into this tower. When the enemy senses they're close to the flag, they will charge the inner gate, leaving themselves open to a boiling reception.





5 Diplomacy & Computer Opponents

Although it's very possible for you to defeat *Lords of the Realm II* without any finagling with your adversaries, you can make your cause a heck of a lot easier if you carefully play the game of politics. As disdainful as that thought might be, you'll have to be a sneaky little rodent to fully use the diplomacy model to your advantage.

In the end, there can be only one king, so you'll have to be prepared to do what it takes, not just on the battlefield but in matters of diplomacy, as well.

The Personalities

It stands to reason that when playing other humans, you'll have to judge their character on an individual basis. However, when it comes to the four fine friends the computer serves up, you can usually count on each of them staying true to a few particular traits. Generally, as with flesh and blood opponents, you can't trust any of 'em as far as you can throw 'em. Eventually, even the strongest ally will turn against you in order to procure their place as king (or queen, as the case may be).

The Baron

The Baron is the patriarch of the group. He has a strong sense of tradition and justice, but he firmly believes that he is the only one qualified to be ruling sovereign. He will do whatever it takes to make it to the throne, and will not worry in the least about your fortunes or feelings. He's the ultimate pragmatist.

You can be fairly certain of your alliances with the Baron. If he forms an alliance with you, he will usually give you warning before attacking your position. However, that warning is often given just before he strikes. Sending gifts and compliments to the old guy will probably only serve to make *you* feel better about the relationship. Although the Baron can be swayed somewhat, he is best described as a bit of a "prickly pear".

The Bishop

Back in medieval times, the line between government and religion was blurred at best. The attitudes of the high-ranking church officials of the day were in line with those of an autocratic dictatorship, and the Bishop emulates well his historical counterparts.

The Bishop has a nasty tendency to turn on you in the blink of an eye, and to use the Church as justification for his actions. He will grovel like a worm when he's in dire straits, and will show absolutely no mercy when he is on top. Give the Bishop a wide berth if at all possible, but if you must have dealings with him, watch his actions carefully, and leave no area without defense which borders on his.

The Countess

If the Bishop is someone to be wary of when it comes to alliances, then the Countess is someone to run from at high speed. Without a doubt, the Countess is the least trustworthy of the bunch. As the manual proclaims, get involved with this lady at your own risk!

The Knight

The Knight is the hothead of the group. Typified by overt masculine posturing, he'll often do chancy things in order to preserve his image. The Knight is an excellent opponent to flank attack, as he often leaves the "back door" open, so to

speak. On the other hand, the Knight is someone that will hit you again and again with all he's got, even if he's losing, so be wary. An early alliance with the Knight can be advantageous if it prevents you from a war of attrition with this hothead.

Savoir-Faire

How you manage your image among the other players will greatly affect their perceptions of you, and, in turn, your ability

Figure 5-1

The diplomacy screen is an excellent way to get a quick look at how the other players see you.

to make alliances. And if you decide to make alliances, when will you break them, and how? Will you move in and pillage your friend's counties to gain the element of surprise, or will you tactfully break off your commitment to avoid being viewed as a scumbag?

Messages

Part of the fun of playing against human opponents is doling out messages in one form or another. You can send insults, beg for mercy, barter for goods, or even use some odious comment to incite your enemies into battle. Be sure to keep a cool head and a sense of humor when you're typing your notes.

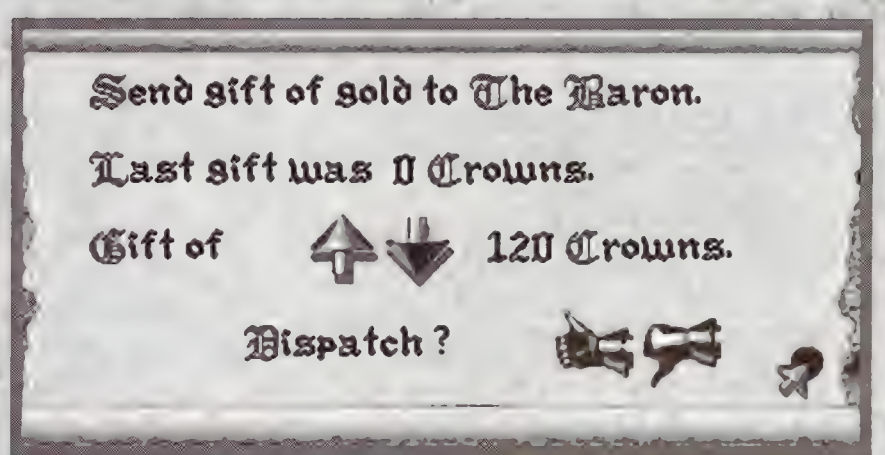


Figure 5-2
Giving away some goods to a grumpy opponent might just persuade them to your line of thinking.

Gifts

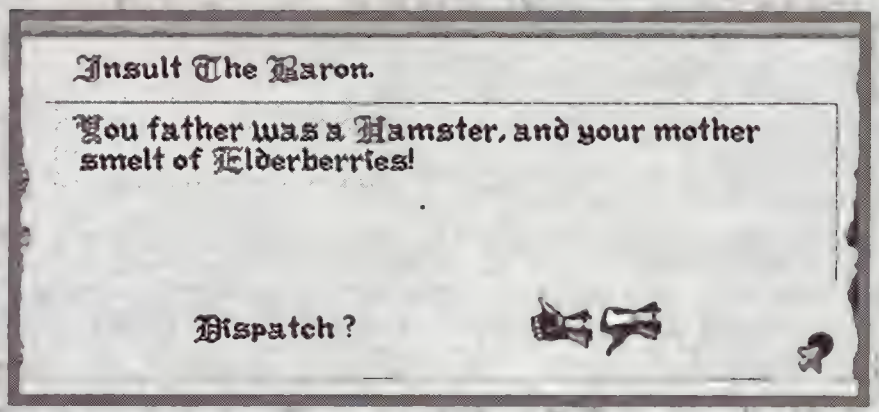
You can send a monetary gift to another player in an attempt to raise your standing in the eyes of the receiver. This can be a very effective way of turning opinion in your favor, which is especially important with your immediate neighbors. Be wary. though. There is no guarantee that a gift will sway the recipient. In fact, if you start giving gifts hand over fist, the receiver will probably be leery of your intentions. If you are going to give gifts, don't do it every turn. It takes time to cultivate a relationship. Also note that gifts need to be of increasing size if you expect any continued benefit. A gift of 100 crowns is probably a good starting point, and a gift of 10 crowns would surely be viewed as an insult.

Compliments and Insults

Compliments: If you are of a frugal disposition, you can simply choose to send a compliment to gain favor with your opponents. This method usually works, but it's important not to send a compliment more than once or twice a year (every four seasons). Otherwise, the others will sense your attempts to suck up, and ultimately trust you less in the future.

Figure 5-3

An insult like this will only serve you in games against humans—but it can't hurt to try.

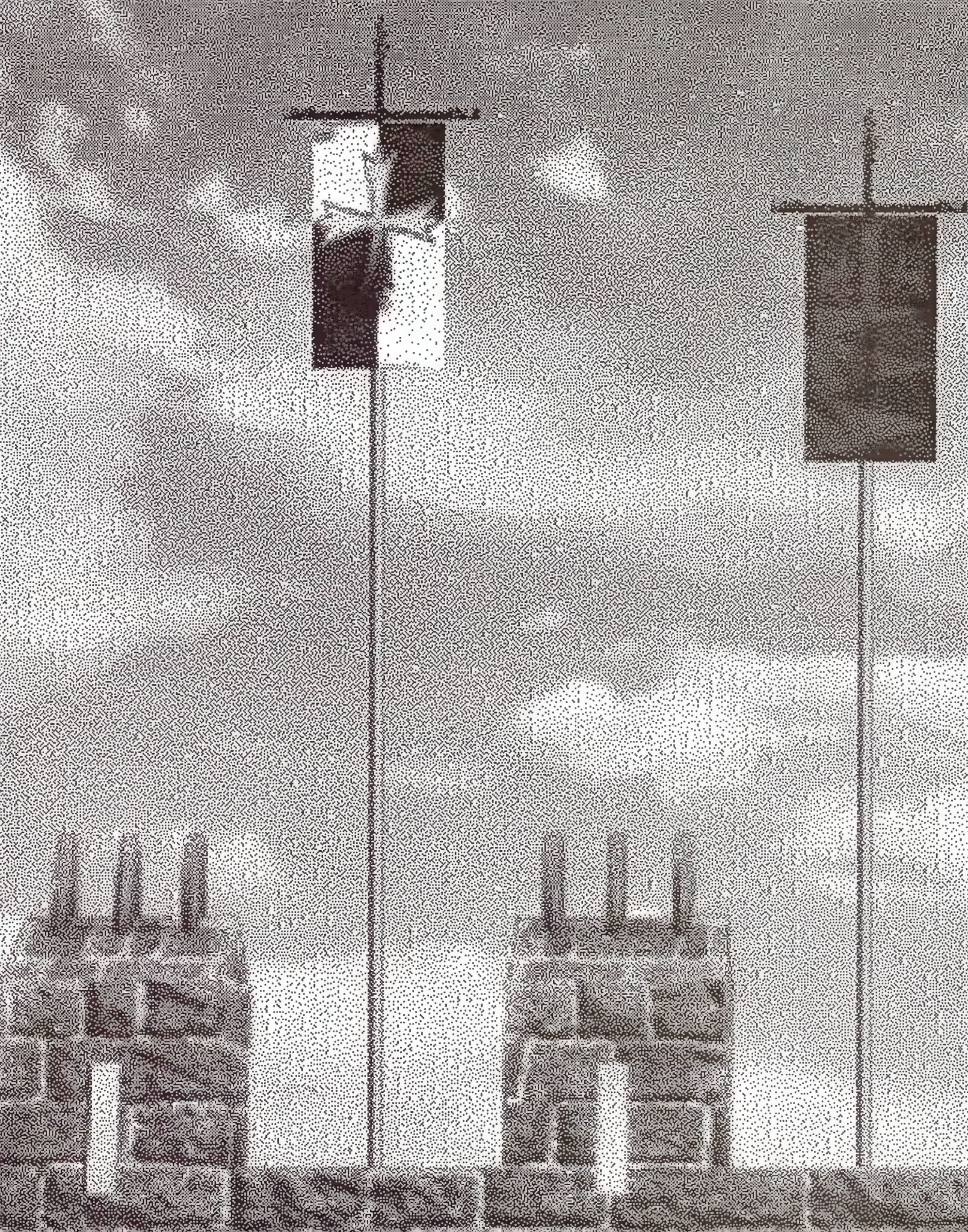


Compliments are an excellent way to woo an opponent into your confidence over many turns. Once you've gotten the opponent's confidence, you can march into his or her county and stab 'em in the back. Surprise!

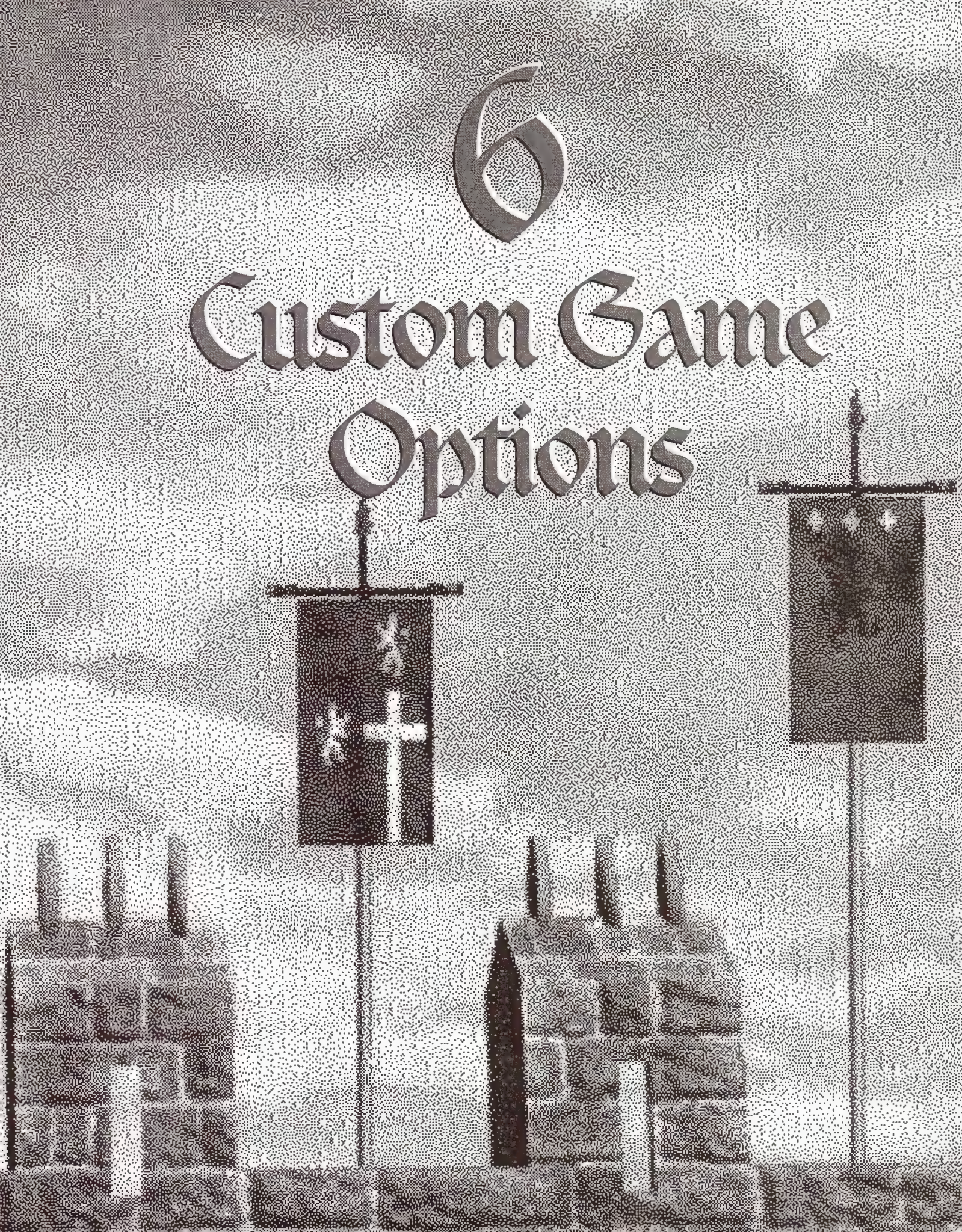
Insults: This is a great way to seriously aggravate your enemies—especially human opponents. Insults can be used to polarize some players against you, and possibly strengthen your position with other players. Multiple insults will have a concrete effect on the recipient's opinion of you, albeit unfavorable.

Opinions

It is important to remember that if you go around pillaging enemy's fields and attacking players with whom you have an alliance, the other players' opinions of you will decrease accordingly. Don't expect to make new alliances if you've been naughty. It stands to reason that you reap what you sow. However, if you like to live vicariously through computer games, then you can let the nasty side of your personality emerge.



6 Custom Game Options



In addition to the preset scenarios in the "Play Now" campaign, *Lords of the Realm II* allows you to customize the initial starting forces and game options prior to playing any of the scenarios in the game. Some of these options sound fairly small, but can actually have a significant effect on how the game plays. Whether or not you start with a castle or an army, for instance, can affect which computer opponent does best, since their strategies hinge on what resources they have and when. This chapter will describe each of these options to help you have more fun with the game.

We recommend that players try the "Play Now" scenarios first to become familiar with the game, since the custom options for these scenarios have been chosen in advance and are intended to start off easy and then increase in difficulty of play as the campaign progresses. When you feel ready, though, you can play *Lords II* with a variety of starting conditions and game options from the Custom Game Screen. This screen also gives players complete control over which map to play next and provides access to maps that are not included in "Play Now".

To change the number of players in the game, click on the "Nobles" drop down menu and then select the number of

Nobles that will be vying for the crown. Some maps are specifically designed for less than five players, in which case you will only be able to choose from the maximum allowed.

Maps

The first decision you can make on this screen is which map to play. Twenty-four maps are included in the game and more are expected to come (visit the Sierra website at www.sierra.com). The currently selected map is displayed in the upper right corner of the screen.

Game Options

The twelve options can be roughly divided into two groups: **Advanced Options** and **Starting Options.** Advanced Options will be in effect throughout the game. They represent certain optional rules that can be chosen prior to starting the game and can also be toggled during the game (through the "Advanced" item on the "Options" menu). Starting Options determine the resources at your disposal when the game begins. The Advanced Options are: *Advanced Farming, Exploration,*

Armies Eat, Time Limit and *Fight?*. The Starting Options are: *Nobles, Difficulty, Army Size, Starting Castle, Weapons, Crowns* and *County Status.*

Advanced Options

Advanced Farming has the most profound effect on gameplay of any of the options on the Custom Game Screen. When this option is on, grain farming changes dramatically. The *Labor* cost for grain farming will change from season to season to reflect the nature and demands of the planting season. *Fertility* affects grain production, and *Weather* has more of an effect on farming. In addition, the *Efficiency* of your peasants assigned to industry will affect resource production and weapon construction. We strongly suggest that you become comfortable with the basic game before attempting to introduce this option. You should also get used to the Advanced Labor Panel before turning on this option. Information on labor, fertility, weather and efficiency is accessed primarily through the Advanced Labor Panel.

Labor Issues & Seasons

The labor cost for grain farming with Advanced Farming turned off is constant throughout the year. In other words, if you plant one field, you will need the same number of farmers in each of the next four seasons to plant, cultivate, and finally harvest your grain. With advanced farming turned on, the amount of labor per sack of grain depends on the season of the year. In the winter season, you will decide how many fields will be planted. Sowing requires substantial amounts of labor. In fact, it requires triple the amount of labor to sow grain as it does to maintain the grain while it grows and ripens. When autumn comes, the labor cost for harvesting is so high that you will usually have to remove workers from other tasks to ensure that your entire crop is harvested. Harvesting grain requires ten times the labor that maintaining growing and ripening grain does. You can monitor the labor cost of farming by clicking on any of your active grain fields on the map, the grain symbol on the information panel, or the grain area on the Advanced Labor Panel. Compare the number of farmers currently working with the expected number of sacks of grain

that will be harvested. While the fluctuation in labor costs requires more careful management and will influence decisions on when to raise armies, build castles, and gather resources (possibly even reducing efficiency), the yield from grain with Advanced Farming on can be substantially more than with Basic farming. Of course, the yield is highly dependent on fertility and can be dramatically affected by weather.

Fertility

The **Fertility** of the soil in the county will have a dramatic effect on how much grain you will produce. The current fertility level of a county is displayed at the top of the Advanced Labor Panel for that county. This display does not appear when Advanced Farming is turned off. Note that this is not all bad. With excellent fertility, you can produce many more sacks of grain from each sack planted than with average fertility (which is what the Non-Advanced Farming always uses).

If you allow your fertility to remain low, your crops will yield substantially less than they would with Advanced Farming turned off. Fertility is determined by the relative number of grain fields to fallow fields. The number of fields assigned to

cattle farming is irrelevant. If you have two fallow fields for every three grain fields, fertility will remain constant. If you have more than two fallow fields for every three grain fields, fertility will improve, and vice versa. The fertility level in the county will improve or reduce the expected yield twice during the growing season. Check the grain information pop-up panel in a county each turn during a growing season to see this working. In spring and summer, the expected yield will be different from the previous season due to the effects of fertility.

Weather

Weather will also have more of an effect on grain farming with Advanced Farming turned on. Each season, every county on the map experiences some type of weather. The weather for each county is displayed at the top of the Advanced Labor Panel for each county (only available with Advanced Farming on). Weather provides a one-season-only boost or penalty to the grain currently in the fields. Although weather may appear to be random at first, it actually occurs in regional patterns that vary from map to map. This is the primary reason why it is wise to have a mixed economy in each of your counties; a

drought or flood can destroy crops in an entire region. While this may result in a partial loss of a cattle herd if it happens to be in the affected field, all grain fields are affected by weather in addition to any that are completely destroyed.

Efficiency

Efficiency will alter the way production of resources and weapons is calculated. It will also influence the choices you make when assigning laborers. As with fertility, when efficiency is low, production will be worse than when Advanced Farming is turned off. However, the reverse is also true. Raising efficiency and maintaining it at high levels will pay solid dividends once your population reaches a respectable size. When workers are assigned to a task, they will begin with a very low efficiency level that will improve over time. When new workers are added, their poor efficiency will be averaged with the efficiency of workers already assigned to that particular task. The only exception to this is that workers will retain efficiency for a short time after being removed from an industry. This is very useful in autumn turns when most laborers need to work

the fields to bring in the harvest. If these workers are returned to their production areas on the following turn, they will retain their previous efficiency level.

Exploration

Exploration determines whether or not the Kingdom Map is completely visible at the start of the game. With Exploration turned off, the entire kingdom will be visible when the game begins. With Exploration turned on, each player will only be able to see his home county. There are two methods of revealing terrain: army exploration and conquest. Each army can see six squares in all directions. As the army moves, terrain will be revealed. In addition, whenever a county is captured, it will become completely visible to the new owner. If exploration is toggled on and off and then back on again during the game, the previously unexplored territory will again be hidden. Of course, it is left to your own conscious as to whether or not this is fair (or, more importantly, fun). In multiplayer games, only the game creator can toggle advanced options, and any changes made affect all players.

Armies Eat

Armies Eat is *Army Foraging* on the Options menu in the game. This option, while much easier to understand than Advanced Farming, also makes a big difference on how the game is played. With Army Foraging off, armies do not need to eat. When Army Foraging is on, however, armies will eat from whichever county they happen to be in, friendly or enemy. There is one important exception to this rule: Armies that are garrisoned in castles feed from supplies of food in and around each castle rather than from the county they are in. In other words, you do not need to feed them out of the food supply from your county.

Armies will always try to eat at normal rations regardless of the ration level set in the county. If you have an army in one of your counties, feel free to increase the ration level to double or triple rations. Only the citizens will eat (and gain a benefit from) the extra rations. However, if rations are set below normal rations and there is enough food in stock for the armies in the county to achieve a higher ration level, then they will steal any food necessary to achieve the higher level. You will not be able to deprive armies, friendly or enemy, of food simply by reducing

rations when there is plenty of food in stock. Beware—only the serfs in your county will suffer from this tactic.

Armies will begin to starve if they do not achieve at least Half Rations. The first season that this occurs, your steward will inform you that the army has not eaten. On subsequent turns, if the army continues to starve, 10% of your army will desert each turn until they *all* desert your cause! Once a starving army can find adequate food, this process is stopped right away. Right click on any friendly army to check its current health. This is displayed at the top of the army pop-up when Foraging is on.

Time Limit

Time Limit sets a fixed amount of time that you will have to complete your turn. The amount of time remaining is displayed in the upper right corner of the kingdom map. The time limit will remain in effect throughout the entire course of the game and can not be toggled off. For multiplayer games, this ensures that games will be completed in a reasonable period of time. Of course, it can also be used in solo play to keep the game moving along. Four minutes is generally plenty of

time to complete even a long turn once players become familiar with the game. Note that in multiplayer games, players can see who has not ended their turn by looking at the shield display on the title bar. In addition, it is possible to continue moving and managing counties after pressing "end turn." If time runs out before you end turn, however, your turn is over.

Fight?

Fight? determines whether or not battles against computer opponents, both neutral and Noble, will always be autocalculated. While intended primarily to speed up multiplayer games, this option is also useful for players who generally prefer to autocalculate their battles (you don't know what you're missing!!!). This option can be toggled from the Advanced menu item on the Options menu while the game is in progress. Autocalculated battles are weighted for unit quality and give a slight edge to the defender (most noticeably for sieges). One way to use this option effectively is to start a game with it turned on, and then turn it off after all or most neutral counties have been captured. Battles later in the game tend to be much larger and more interesting.

Starting Options

Nobles

Nobles determines the number of players in the game. Most maps can be played with two to five players in any combination of human and computer opponents. The Nobles menu will have fewer options whenever a map is chosen which has a maximum of less than five players. The starting locations on each map are predetermined, but which location you will actually start in is random. Thus, there are only five counties in England that you can start in, but which one you receive as your home county is completely random. In addition, the maps have all been balanced for two-to-four-player games in addition to five-player games by restricting which starting counties are available, and then randomly assigning players to them. In Italy, for example, a three-player game will start players in Sicily, Lazio, and Veneto so that no one player has an unfair advantage.

Difficulty

Difficulty determines both the number of usable fields in all counties at the start of the game and also the aggressiveness of

the computer opponents and how well-armed Neutral counties are. When difficulty is set to Impossible, each county starts with only four usable fields. All other fields start the game barren and must be reclaimed. Hard and Medium games start counties with six and eight usable fields respectively, while Easy games begin with no barren fields. The computer personalities in the game increase their management skills and aggressiveness at higher difficulty levels. In multiplayer games, if there are no computer opponents, difficulty serves simply to set how many fields are usable in each county at the start of the game.

Once you become familiar with the game system, increase the challenge by raising the difficulty level. Contrary to popular belief, Impossible is not really impossible—although it may seem so at first. For a real challenge, try playing an Impossible game with Weak counties and no other resources on a small map like Italy or Crusades (especially if you start in Lazio or Jerusalem). The sequence of "Play Now" scenarios gradually increases in difficulty by setting a certain difficulty level, then reducing starting resources for one or two scenarios, and then increasing difficulty again. Pay attention to the number of usable fields at the start of the game for advance notice on

how formidable the computer opponents will be. Starting with Strong counties and Impossible difficulty level provides a unique challenge quickly: the county has far too many people and cows than can be sustained by four fields. It is necessary to quickly reclaim fields, raise armies, and sell cows to bring order to the county.

Army Size

Army Size can be set to "No Army" to start a game from scratch. A small army consists of 25 swordsmen and 25 archers. While not very impressive, this small professional army can do some exploring and can reduce by years the time needed to capture an adjacent neutral county. A medium army doubles the size of a small army and adds 50 pikemen to boot. This army can be combined with freshly-raised peasants to immediately conquer nearby neutrals or even threaten a Noble. Large armies are twice the size of medium armies and are powerful enough to significantly reduce total game time before victory (even for multiplayer games).

The larger the army given to Nobles at the start of the game, the shorter the game will be. This option is very useful

for multiplayer games when a limited time period is available for play. Combined with higher difficulty levels, this will often call for a different style of play as well. Longer games demand long-term strategies. When starting with large armies, games can often be won by focusing almost entirely on resource and weapon construction and army building rather than castle building and forming a solid economy. Of course, misjudging the likelihood of quick military victories leads directly to the gallows! If you are looking for a challenge against the computer opponent, note that any resources that are given out at the start of the game (armies, weapons, cash or castles) will tend to help you more than them (they are *very* efficient at the start of the game). Be careful when starting games with large armies and weak counties: armies need maintenance and food. It is often best to start with some cash in addition to large armies.

Starting Castle

Starting Castle will place a castle of the chosen type in each player's starting county. The castle will not contain a free garrison, but if it is upgraded, the resulting autogarrison will be

of the appropriate size. The tax bonus applies as normal and is as powerful a benefit early on as it is later in the game. Of course, the most important benefit of starting with a castle is that chances of survival are greatly increased. This applies equally to multiplayer games as to solo games. The effectiveness of castle defenses should never be underestimated.

Weapons

Weapons will be placed in each player's inventory at the start of the game when this option is chosen. Similar to *Armies*, this option allows players to get off to a quick start and shorten the total duration of the game without changing the game model in any way. *Armies*, of course, provides a larger advantage because the troops have already been raised. However, when starting with weapons, players do not immediately have to worry about feeding and paying a standing army. Thus, *Weapons* is more flexible because an army does not need to be raised until desired or needed. Experiment with different combinations of starting weapons and army strengths and you are bound to find settings that provide a game suited to your own particular taste. "Few" and "Some" Weapons provide the

same number of weapons as "small" and "medium" Armies, respectively, provide troops. "Many" Weapons will give each player one hundred of every type of weapon except knights.

Crowns

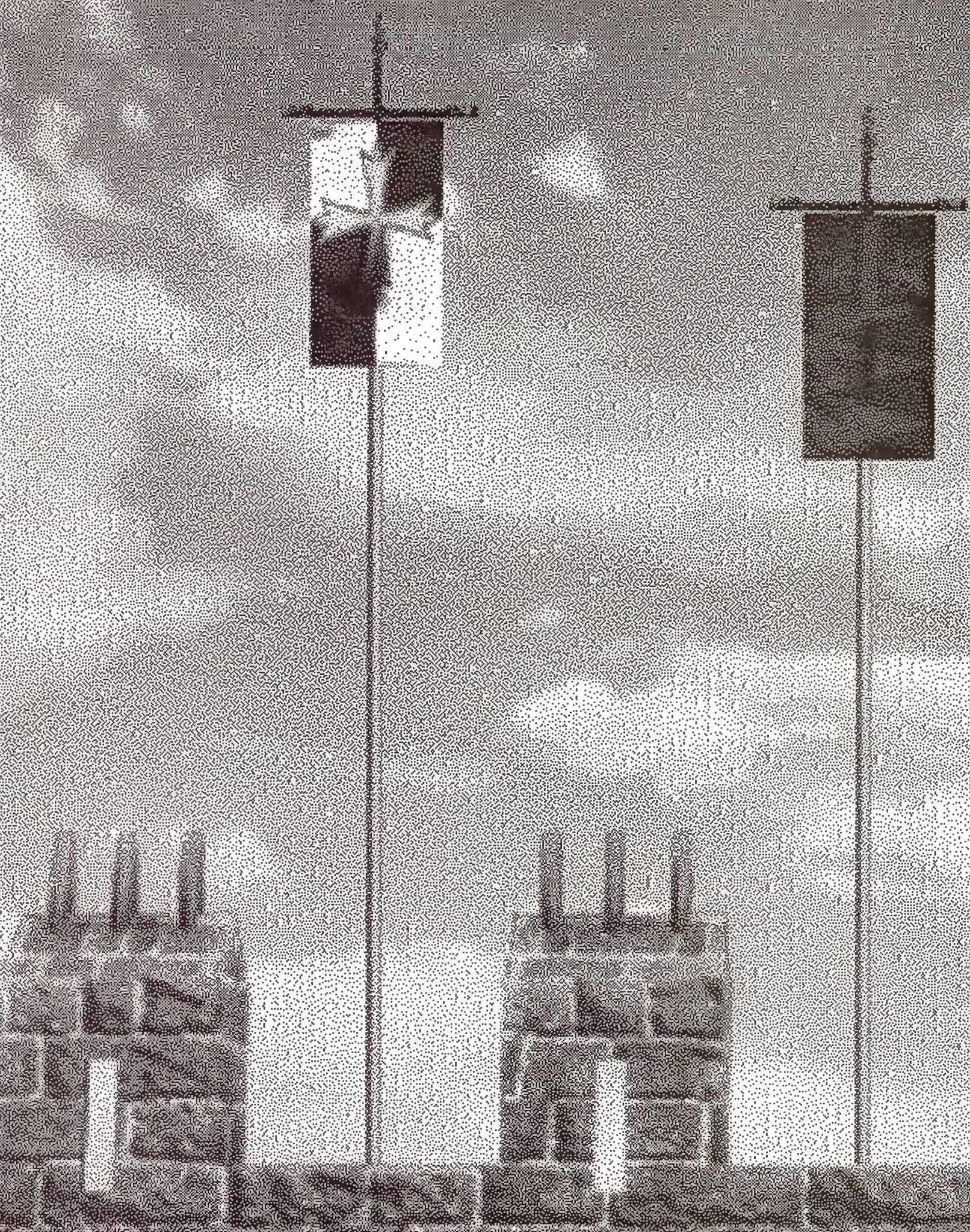
Crowns supplies each player with the stated number of crowns at the start of the game. This option can be necessary when starting games with large armies and medium or weak counties. This option allows players the greatest degree of freedom in choosing a starting strategy. Starting with large amounts of cash can lead to very interesting multiplayer games where each player spends his money in very different ways. In solo play, *Crowns* is an excellent option to choose when exploring different economic and military strategies.

County Status

County Status affects the starting population, happiness, health, and food reserves of all counties in the Kingdom. Food reserves can vary slightly when starting with large armies and foraging on. Weak counties start with only 165 people, 47 happiness, average health, 45 cows, and 10 grain. This setting generally leads to long games where the winner is the

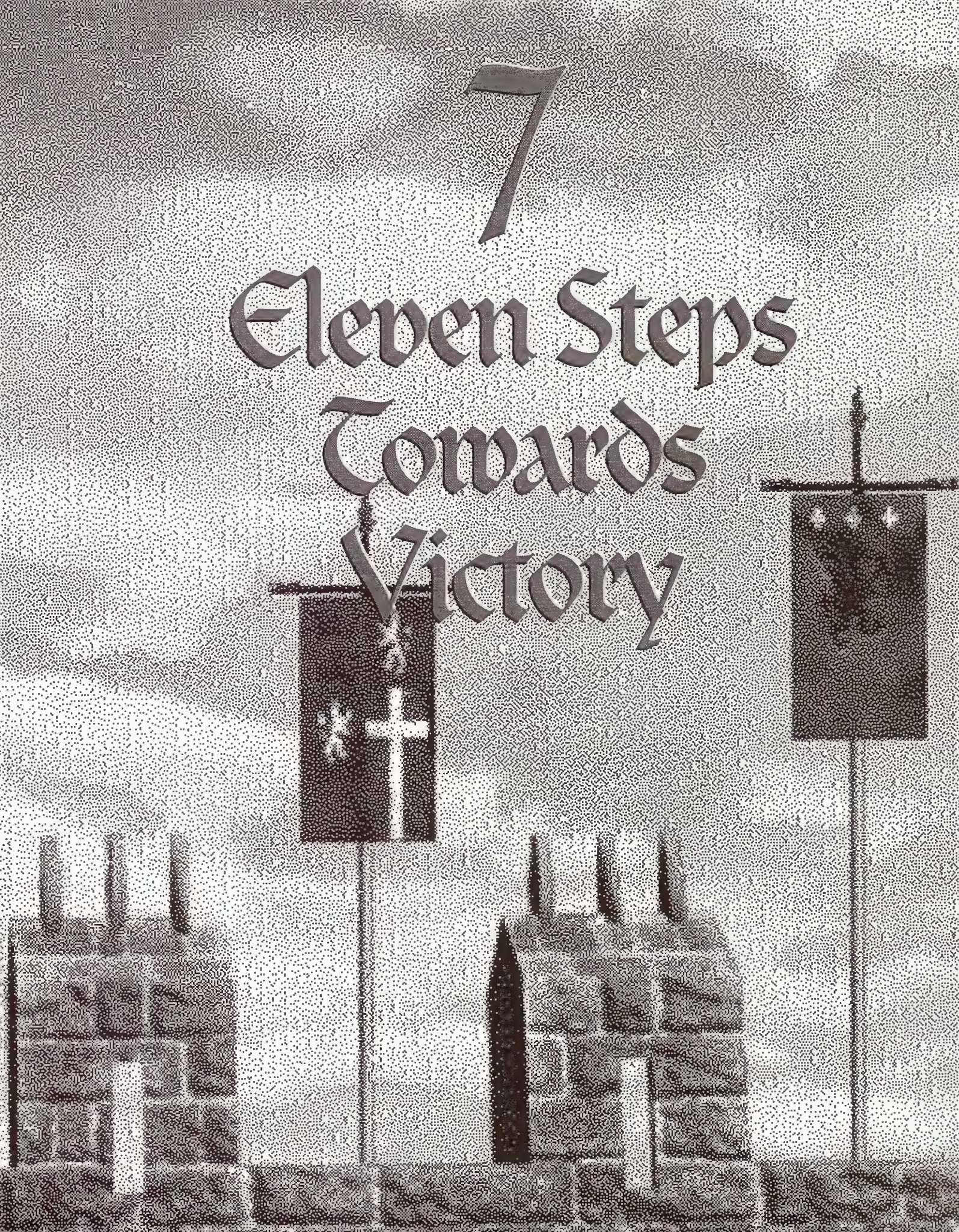
player with the soundest economic strategies. Average counties contain 435 people at 72 happiness and good health fed by 101 cows. Average counties are excellent for beginners because there is only one type of food economy to manage. For multiplayer games with Advanced Farming, however, any players that start with a merchant can plant grain immediately and can gain an early advantage. Average counties are the most suitable for combination with other game options. Strong counties are very strong. With 1,169 people, 92 happiness, and good health sustained by 286 cows and 500 grain, it is hard not to get off to a great start. Combined with Large Armies and Many Weapons, this is the best way to play a quick game that will be decided by a few massive and bloody battles.

With over three million possible combination of options on each of 24 maps, *Lords II* is highly customizable. Specifically designed to offer the widest range of options to allow for all tastes, you can't help but find settings that satisfy your particular preferences. Even after finding options you like, it is well worth the time to try other settings: each will lead to a different style of play. Best of all, once you have chosen settings that you like, *Lords II* remembers them between games.



7

Eleven Steps Towards Victory



This section is intended to guide you through a game and set you up for a chance at claiming the crown. It focuses primarily on the first half of a game because this is the most important. Without a solid foundation, victory will be very difficult indeed. It should be noted that this set of tips is certainly not the only route you can take to victory, and turning on certain options for a Custom Game may preclude certain tactics. However, for the purpose of supplying a solid, winning strategy, the following will suffice.

Food Preparation

The first thing you need to do (after picking your name and coat of arms) is to set the foundation for your budding kingdom: your food supply. As mentioned previously, the safest way to manage food is to raise both cattle and grain. You will not start out with any grain, so save your money to purchase a couple hundred sacks of grain the first time a merchant enters your county. If you're lucky, that will be in your first turn.

Right from the start, set four fields aside for grain use. Once you buy some grain (for seed), the planting will automatically occur the next winter.

Because the chances of having both your cattle and grain destroyed by random events and weather are very slim, a mixed food economy is the safest way to feed your populace. Since only a portion of your fields will be dedicated to cows, your dairy production will be restricted. The trick here is to restrict the size of your herd so that there is no overcrowding. Without overcrowding, the birth rate of your cows will be maximized. Adjust your ration slider so that during each turn, you are eating the same number of cows that are born. The result is that your herd size remains constant and your people are fed largely by cows and dairy. Grain will supplement this and should be stockpiled.

Garrison Castle

Unfortunately, the castle you are given at the start of the game does not come with its own garrison, so as soon as you can

afford it, throw at least 50 troops in there. Having a garrison will, at the very least, provide you with one extra turn in which to launch a counterattack.

The initial garrison should be about 50 archers. When your population is around 500-600 and your happiness is over 50, build an army of as many archers as you have, and the rest macemen or peasants. You may have to purchase archers from the merchant or go all out to build some before you garrison. Ideally, you want to have about 75% archers/crossbows in the castle. When you have the chance, be sure to upgrade both your castle and the garrison. When you upgrade or build a new castle, make one that has a moat. Archers and castles with a moat can inflict hideous losses on attackers before they even have a chance to engage you in combat.

Make Alliances

Try to make alliances with at least one of your immediate bordering neighbors. Although there is absolutely no guarantee that an ally won't attack you, an alliance is another layer of assurance that you'll be safe—at least for the time being.

Capture Neutral Counties

As soon as your castle is garrisoned and you can raise an additional army of 250 armed soldiers, be sure to set out and capture as many of the neighboring neutral counties as possible. Early in the game, these counties will not have substantial defensive forces and should prove easy targets to add to your empire. Be careful not to venture too far from home, though, because all your counties must be joined together to remain in your power. If you string out your counties across the map, it will be easy for the enemy to take out several counties in one fell swoop.

Start to Gather Raw Materials and Make Weapons

You've probably already been doing this since the first turn, but once you've got your food supply worked out, it's important to look at which counties are producing what, both in raw

materials (iron, stone, timber) and in weaponry. You'll need both iron and wood to outfit armies and to build the castles of your dreams. Once multiple counties are controlled and fields are reclaimed, have each county specialize in producing one item. This can be more efficient and makes county management very simple. Any resources not produced can be purchased.

Watch Your Happiness

This is the single most important rating in the game. Everything affects happiness. Happiness determines growth (through birth and immigration) and is needed for taxes and armies. If happiness drops too low for too long, counties are lost. Keep happiness up by increasing health (which is strongly effected by ration level), keeping taxation low, and, most importantly, raising armies based on how much happiness is spent rather than how many men you want. Raise as many men as you can, but never beyond an adverse impact of 10 points to your happiness rating. Frequently, raising small armies, spending about 10 happiness, and then combining them will have much less of

an impact on both happiness and population growth than periodically raising a large army. If you can keep your happiness over 90, then you'll have plenty of reserve happiness in case of natural disaster or emergency army raising.

Start to Build a Large Army

Eventually you will need a monster army to be able to maintain multiple attack/sieges without having to replace large numbers of troops. Large armies are much more able to completely overwhelm the opposition, and thus take less casualties. As mentioned above, building lots of small armies, then combining them into one, is a good way to build a large army without considerably draining a county's resources.

Eliminate the Weak

After you have captured several neighboring neutral counties, it is often a good idea to sit back and manage your domain in an effort to make it strong. This strengthening occurs on both a military and an economic level, and includes stockpiling food

and building and garrisoning castles. As you are doing this, your enemies will hopefully be pounding on each other more than they pound on you. As a result of the inevitable fighting, there should be some weaknesses with one or more of your opponents. If you move in when the time is right, you can often obtain a choice county replete with copious population and resources.

The Push for the Throne

Once you have taken out one or more of the enemy nobles, you need to build one or two more large armies and begin a sweeping multi-county push toward the furthest enemy county. Multiple large armies pushing in from several directions will panic your opponents. They will often only be able to defend on one front, and once you obtain over 50% of the counties, victory can come quickly.

Stubborn Opponents?

If one of your enemies is putting up a good fight even though you have 2/3 of the available counties, merely build a few

smaller armies (50 peasants each) and pillage the villages and crops of the enemy's counties. Yes, this is nasty, but it will destroy his/her economy in a few short turns, and weaken the opponent sufficiently for you to gain a victory.

Buy What You Need

Once you have retained a large number of counties and established a decent tax base, you can start supplementing your weapon production by purchasing weapons from the merchant. If you have an extra ten or twenty thousand gold crowns lying around, you can even afford to supplement all your armies with crack mercenary troops. Remember, once you can afford it, there is no shame in buying what you need.

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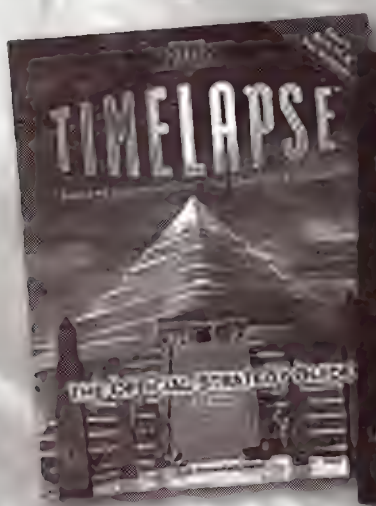

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